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Interview with Jack Shellenberger

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Information Series

JACK SHELLENBERGER

Interviewed by: G. Lewis Schmidt

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Q: This is Lew Schmidt interviewing Jack Shellenberger, in his office on the 21st of April 1990. Jack, I'm going to ask you to start this interview by giving a brief background on your education, what you did before you got into the Information Service operation, what brought you into it, and from that point on we will take it in sequence of your various assignments. So will you start with your short biosketch?

SHELLENBERGER: I was born and raised in Upper New York State and then Yonkers, New York. My father was a YMCA secretary and he was shifted to Los Angeles when I was in high school. World War II had just broken out. And that was a time when Los Angeles was a very charged region. The depiction of the Japanese was everything that you could imagine in terms of negativity. The YMCA had a program where high school students were urged to go to these desert harvest places and do what Japanese workers had been doing prior to their being interned. So in the summer of 1944 I was a grape picker in the San Joaquin Valley, living in a tarpaper shack with 40 or 50 others and earning my dues. It gave me a sort of an idea as to what the conditions would be for somebody employed as a grape harvester.

One of my father's friends was a steward from the Swedish line Gripsholm. He had a connection with the International Red Cross, which meant that he had to go to these camps where the Japanese were interned to check on their condition. He would come back and I remember he would describe the conditions. It opened a horizon for me, something to do with Japan and something to do with international affairs in general.

After graduating from high school—and about that same time my mother died suddenly—I went on to Occidental College on a scholarship and spent a year there in an accelerated program. But by the time the war ended and 1946 came, I was due to be drafted. Well, I fooled them. I enlisted for three years to take advantage of the GI Bill and spent most of my time in the Army as a radio-television recruiter or staff announcer for the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service in Hollywood. So it was not a disagreeable three years at all.

I came out with the idea of making a career in broadcasting, indeed was hired by a station near Philadelphia and did a lot of radio acting in Philadelphia. I thought I was in great shape in terms of career. I was making a good income and I was enjoying a certain amount of celebrity. There was a producer at the station in Philadelphia who made the dramas work and hired me for those acting and writing roles. He had been a graduate of Northwestern. He urged me not to stay in the broadcast field but to get a degree. Reluctantly I applied and was accepted at the School of Speech at Northwestern University where I majored in broadcasting and theater and acting and journalism, and then international affairs as a minor. I graduated in 1952. I had applied to the State Department to get into its Cultural and Information bureau. But they said they were in a job freeze. So I made plans to go on to the London School of Economics and study international relations.

But then I married Jill and that made all the difference. We decided that I'd do graduate work at Northwestern instead of London. While on our honeymoon, I had a cable from the news director of WCAU in Philadelphia, the CBS affiliate, asking me if I wanted to join his team as a radio-TV writer/reporter. I took that job and found it a great experience in

terms of writing and reporting skills. It was the McCarthy era, I remember vividly. And I had among other assignments the task of interviewing Joe McCarthy who was at the time a target of constant commentary and criticism from many quarters, including my boss, who eventually was denied a sponsor. The management at the station felt he was not too tenable as a broadcaster, given the violent reactions he generated to his criticism of McCarthy. I hadn't realized the degree to which the McCarthy era had polarized American society and the vehemence of those who resented any criticism of the Senator. But he, through the Army-McCarthy hearings, was unseated, as it were.

1955: Entrance into USIA

In the meantime, I had an opportunity to cover a speech by Milton Eisenhower, the President's brother, at Lincoln University, in which he described this new U.S. government entity which would be called the U.S. Information Agency. The idea was to win the minds and hearts of peoples of the world. I thought, well, this was something that would do two things for me: it would meet my aspirations to get overseas and it would permit me to use whatever skills I have as a communicator. So I applied and after a year or so of tests and clearances I was accepted. My first stumbling block was the fact that I was married. That was a no-no for a junior officer trainee. But they rescinded the requirement with the condition that we not have children during the first year of being in the Foreign Service. Can you imagine something like that being done today?

The Washington experience and training for two months was just delightful. We had an opportunity to enjoy the culture and the history of this town and were very thrilled to be going abroad. We didn't know where until the last month of training when I was informed that I'd be going to Tokyo. There were seven of us in that class. It was the second trainee class for USIA. Of the seven, I'm the lone survivor in terms of being still on the payroll full time.

Our first stop en route to Tokyo was Honolulu. We enjoyed it. The PanAm Clipper, which permitted us to have the benefits of first class travel with champagne and the linen on the dining tray, stopping at Wake at dawn. Very exciting.

Q: And a berth?

SHELLENBERGER: And berths, if we wanted, but I was too anxious. Tokyo's Haneda Airport was crowded; it still is. I heard my name being called over the public address system. But I was unable to get through Customs to answer the call. So I was a bit agitated. But as we emerged from Customs, a driver, Japanese driver, was there holding a card with my name. He took us through the congested streets toward the Tokyo Grand Hotel. The traffic was mostly tiny taxis and what they called bata-bata which were three-wheeled motorcycle trucks, and then of course bicycles. It was definitely not the Tokyo of today. Tokyo Grand Hotel wasn't very grand, but it was only a block or so away from the Mantetsu Building where USIS was located. Our first American greeter was none other than Lew Schmidt, who came over to the hotel and proposed that we go to lunch at the Union Club. At that time Lew was carrying responsibility as PAO, as Executive Officer, as Deputy PAO, and we were astonished at his and Peg's graciousness and generosity, given all the responsibilities that they had to carry.

I enjoyed the training period in Tokyo. It was a natural for me to go into the radio side of the operation, producing half-hour programs on developments in America, because the media at that time, the Japanese media didn't have the wherewithal to maintain bureaus in the United States to any great extent.

Q: Since you were broadcasting or sending your tapes for broadcast over Japanese stations, you must have been broadcasting in Japanese. Who was doing your voicing for you when you weren't playing music?

SHELLENBERGER: We had two on the team who voiced: Lucy Nakai and Paul Fujimaki. Paul is still a Foreign Service National at USIS Tokyo. I was more or less the editor. And indeed the tapes were sent all over Japan.

William Faulkner's Visit to Japan

What I remember about that year, 1955, 35 years ago, was the visit by the famed Nobel prize winning novelist William Faulkner, who came tired but agreeable, ready to do what he could for his country. He was very patriotic about going out as a cultural ambassador, took it very seriously. But also he was not a vigorous man and a couple of drinks could do him in, as it did on the occasion of an ambassadorial reception. The ambassador sent for Lew Schmidt and a couple of others in USIS and said, “I want that Faulkner out of here in 24 hours.” Well, Faulkner's visit had been touted as the event of the year. And to have him leave would have been disaster. So Lew and the others said, “If he has to go, we'll go with him,” stating that they would monitor him and make sure that there would be no repeat of this incident. I was one of his monitors and I absolutely admired Faulkner's gentleness and his intellect and his patience and his endurance in receiving intellectual after intellectual and giving them all of his attention and not reverting to cant or repetitions. He took every questioner, every question, with the utmost seriousness.

When he went up to Nagano where the Summer seminar which was built about him occurred, he was in all respects a gentleman and an agreeable presence. He wrote an essay called “Impressions of Japan.” It was beautifully written, vivid, and cried out for a motion picture that would put it into everybody's view. I wrote a script, drawing from Faulkner's essay, and we shot that film in Nagano, in the places that he describes in his essay, and found him to be an utterly cooperative collaborator even though heretofore he had never let himself be photographed or filmed. I believe it's the only film other than talking heads video in which he appears as himself. We completed the film after he left, but when he did leave, I remember we took him to the airport early and had him get on

the plane and then come off the plane with a number of USIS people and employees to simulate his arrival. That became the opening of the film.

Q: I hadn't realized he had never been filmed before.

SHELLENBERGER: He had been filmed in interviews, but he had never appeared in one like this. So it's a first and now a last.

I was transferred to Nagoya to take on my first non-training assignment in the middle of 1956.

Q: Before you go on with Nagoya, I would like to ask you to make a brief statement about your impression of the success of the Faulkner visit because there were some snide remarks passed by some members of the embassy as to whether the man was really effective or not. I felt it was one of the great coups that USIA was able to bring off in Japan and I'd like to get your impression.

SHELLENBERGER: Well, there are no less than two definitive books in Japanese and English about the Faulkner visit. Faulkner scholars prior to his visit were a few, you could count them on one hand. Today there's a Faulkner scholar on every literature faculty and every university in Japan. And I think it was probably culturally our greatest contribution to U.S.-Japanese understanding at an intellectual level.

1956: Transfer to Nagoya

My transfer to Nagoya was providential in the sense that it permitted our first child to be born at a U.S. Air Force facility. We would not have had that benefit had we gone to where we were originally assigned, which was Matsuyama. I believe Lew made the decision to put me into Nagoya, a bigger job, a bigger city, than would normally come the way of a junior officer. And so, yes, Katie was born on July 13, 1956 and we enjoyed that Central Japan environment and the program totally. Absorbed by it. Our library was one of the

most active places in the city because so much had been destroyed and so little had been rebuilt that we were one of the prime outlets for information. And about 30% of our book collection was translations into Japanese.

1957: Back to Tokyo as Chief of Motion Pictureand TV Production

I had a call from Harry Keith about a year after I got to Nagoya inviting me to come to Tokyo to be his chief of motion picture and television production. And since I had enjoyed so much the work I had done in television in Philadelphia and doing the Faulkner film, I without too much thought said, yes, I would. Art Hummel later told me he thought I had made a terrible career mistake. Art was the deputy PAO at the time. He said, what you're doing is slipping into the specialist category and that denies you the opportunity to get into the more responsible and higher positions of a USIS Foreign Service Officer.

All that aside, I did enjoy what I did in Tokyo making a number of motion pictures. The ones I can recall most vividly was a cartoon we made to try to satisfy or calm Japanese fears about their economic future as a trading partner of the United States because at that time their deficit with us was enormous, much higher relatively than our deficit with the Japanese is today. So this cartoon was meant to reassure them that they wouldn't always be in deficit with the United States. The other two, “Nihon no Takara” or “Treasures of Japan,” we produced with the cooperation of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. It depicted the living national treasures in the arts category—dubbed by the Emperor as Living National Treasures—doing what they do, whether it's pottery or Kabuki or the Noh theater or painting. And being depicted with American students or apprentices who had come to Japan to be at the master's side. What it did, of course, was to demonstrate not only the cultural tradition of these living national treasures, but the reverence and the respect shown them by a diverse group of Americans who were in Japan to learn the Koto, to learn painting, to learn pottery. It was a great success and had a glittering premier.

The other film I'll mention is one that was produced after the unveiling of a major exhibition entitled “Atoms for Peace.” Now atom was a word that was a no-no in some parts of the embassy because we had not only Nagasaki and Hiroshima, but we'd had a case of a fisherman who had been dusted with radioactive ash from the American Bikini demonstration. And so anything nuclear was sensitive. But the head of the Yomiuri newspaper, a man named Shoriki, urged that Japanese be educated on the peaceful uses of atomic energy. And with the help and guidance of a nuclear physicist from Oak Ridge, a major exhibit was mounted which showed the use of radioisotopes, various types of nuclear reactors that produce energy, even a model of a nuclear powered ship. And we made the film and the film and the exhibit were used for years all over Japan. In fact, that exhibit is still maintained at Tokai Mura, the home of Japanese peaceful atomic research.

Q: I think you told me that at one point the Ambassador, who, I gather, was still John Allison, had some objection to taking that thing on tour around the country.

SHELLENBERGER: I was out of Japan in late '59 and so was John Allison, but it took place. He objected to something else, now that you remind me of it. “The Family of Man,” which again was a very ambitious photo exhibit put together by the great photograph, Edward Steichen, who came to Japan. These were photographs depicting the human face, the human being, from all over the globe and carrying the message that we're all one great family. The Ambassador came over, just prior to the press preview. He went through it and he looked in this one room and there on the back wall was this huge depiction of the photograph of Hiroshima after the atomic blast. He said, “Well, that won't do, that's got to go. I can't imagine that we could use that photo in this exhibit. It would be enormously insulting.” Well, all of us who had been working on the exhibit, and I, who had been making film of the photo and portraits, disagreed. We again had this sort of conference at which we agreed that taking that photo out of the exhibit would become known very quickly and would be considered an insult to Japanese maturity. The Hiroshima photo remained and the U.S. was praised for its inclusion.

1959: Transfer to Moulmein, Burma, as Branch PAO

Art Hummel had gone on to Rangoon as PAO and I received word by some channel that he would like me to come to be his branch PAO in Moulmein, Burma. Never heard of it. But Rudyard Kipling of course wrote of the old Moulmein pagoda which he had looking Eastward to the sea. It doesn't. It faces West.

So we found ourselves, Jill, Katie and I, bound for Rangoon and then flying down the coast for about 40 minutes in a DC-3, to this port city, third largest in Burma, Moulmein, a very mixed up society ethnically with Burman, Mon, Karen, Pakistani, Chinese, and Indian, quite a heterogeneous cultural community. One of the things I remember about Moulmein was the opportunity it gave me to be more or less the eyes and ears of the U.S. government since I was the only U.S. representative in the southern half of Burma. Of course the Burmese are, I found, candid, very eager to communicate, very gracious, absolutely unquenchable in terms of their desire to learn and to take in information. And so our library in Moulmein was the library of record; our Fulbright English teacher, teaching advisor at the junior college in Moulmein was the guest of record for that educational institution. And as we went around and took part in the pwei, or the festivals with our exhibits and with our films, we were considered to be, as a USIS entity, one of the most desired of the concessionaires, if you will.

Q: Of course Burma, having been an English possession for a long time, English had been widely used in the country. At the time you were there, was there still enough English spoken, enough English studied so that your library which must have been largely in English books could be utilized well by the Burmese?

SHELLENBERGER: Anybody in high school had enough English to deal with high school level English material in our library. And certainly in my level of contacts, governmental, English was commonplace in terms of communicating. And also, I sensed that the Burmese did not want to be beholden to any culture, certainly not the British. I believe it's

the only country I can think of in the Third World which had at that time no AID program and did not want an AID program. They felt they could do it on their own, and indeed if you took a poll of economists who looked at the Third World in the early 60s and asked which countries are most likely to make it on their own, Burma would be near the top, because it was a major exporter of rice at that time. But the policies since have certainly suffocated the economy. Of course, let me be quick to point out that the economy was in large part in the hands of non-Burmans. It was in the hands of Chinese and Indians and other people. But that pride later became prideful in a sense that the Ne win regime took all of the motivation for economic expansion and economic success out of the society.

Visit of the American Water Ski Troupe to Moulmein

Art Hummel went on to—I didn't mention the water ski troop.

Q: No, you haven't mentioned that.

SHELLENBERGER: The water ski troupe. An American water ski troupe was touring East Asia under the sponsorship of the USO, entertaining American troops. Well, I heard about them and said, it would be great to have a water ski team in an area which hasn't seen a water skier in action ever. And I bucked the system to get them to come to Moulmein. It was a logistic nightmare but they did make it, taking schooners overnight from Rangoon down to Moulmein and unloading their boats and their engines; a group of about eight young American women and men who had skills and physical energy and were uncommonly attractive. Since there was no hotel in Moulmein, we put up some of them and others were put into a nearby hostel, but they all fed at our place.

The big day came and the schools emptied, a local public holiday was declared, and hundreds of thousands of people came from all over the region to watch this water ski team in action. They were not disappointed. It was exciting and unbelievable for these

people to see what was going on in one aspect of the American culture, combining the water and the ski and the wings that would take a skier high above the boat.

Zhou En-lai, the premier of China, came the following week, I believe, and they again closed the schools, but the contrast between the draw of Zhou En-lai and the draw of the water ski troupe couldn't have been greater.

1962: Washington Tour at Voice of America

Art Hummel had gone on to become Deputy Director of the VOA so when it came time for me to go to, to do my Washington tour, he held out the idea of my joining the worldwide English division as an editor of a daily Report to Asia. I sort of thought I was going to be in the Asia side of things for the rest of my career. Katie by this time was through kindergarten and the Burmese primary school and was speaking more Burmese than English. She would take us around the festivals and knowledgeably introduce us to this and that custom, in her impeccable Burmese.

As it turned out, the editor for Report to Asia didn't want to shift to anything else so I was apprenticed to the editor for Report to Europe and learned to run tapes from one end of the building, from which he would fashion a daily 20-minute public affairs after the news program, commentary, interviews, all that. I found it quite a contrast between what I had been doing in Burma where I was sort of the unofficial ambassador for the whole region. But one learns in the Foreign Service, or should learn, very early that being abroad and being in Washington are two different worlds. Whereas in Burma while we were in a region that had few amenities, not many what we call conventional cultural outlets—I think we had the only refrigerator in the whole southern half of the country and there was no beef, but awfully good fish and awfully good duck and great, great tomatoes—one learns to make the adjustment back to the Washington suburbs and it can be quite an awakening. In many ways highly agreeable and some ways humbling. You learn to get your fingers dirty

and be lost in the bureaucracy, as against being out there where the American embassy representative no matter what his station is considered to be an elite.

The Cuban Missile Crisis

The Report to Europe editorship came to me after my apprenticeship and there I was on the air with a broadcast to Europe but essentially to Eastern Europe, because the other languages were all being jammed. We were a pipeline, and perhaps the pipeline, to the Kremlin in terms of daily articulation of U.S. policies, U.S. priorities. So we had the Cuban missile crisis, and our program, Report to Europe, was very closely monitored, not only by our adversaries but by highly placed people in USIA. In fact one of them came down and sat in the newsroom and observed as I crafted the program, making sure that it was not going to send any wrong signal to the Kremlin.

Q: Was that Bernie Anderson who came down?

SHELLENBERGER: It was Bernie Anderson who sat in the newsroom and looked over every story to make sure it wasn't likely to confuse the Kremlin.

The Kennedy Assassination

The other event, of course, was the assassination of President Kennedy. I normally on Fridays only go out to lunch, to a steak house on Pennsylvania Avenue. But for some reason I didn't get on my way. I was sitting at my desk, and the Stroger, which is a speaker with a direct line to Dallas, was hooked up. And I heard on this speaker the talk-up that is done by the engineers installing a microphone in the hall where Kennedy was supposed to be making an address that noon. He was saying, “I hear there's been some trouble on the parade route, some kind of shots or something.” And the other fellow said, “Yeah, it's probably one of these Texas Rangers having a little fun.” But I ran to my boss, Dick Borden, and we quickly turned on the TV and there was Walter Cronkite saying that something has gone very wrong in Dallas on the motorcade. I was sent to the studio and

for the next, I guess nearly 10 hours, I was the anchor for the reportage of the Kennedy assassination, taking in reports from our various correspondents in Washington and from our stringer—we didn't have enough money, if you can believe it, to send our White House correspondent on that Dallas trip. So we had to rely on what was being transmitted by the commercial broadcasters and the TV. But managed certainly to have enough material to run until 10:00-11:00 that night when Jill came down to pick me up and we—. I remember we went up to the Pennsylvania Avenue, 1600 area, parked and then walked in front of the White House, which was thronged. Many, many people from other cultures in their attire, whether it be Indian or what, African. So it was a very mixed crowd. We tried the White Tower, which used to be near the Agency.

Q: Little old hamburger shop.

SHELLENBERGER: White Tower, for the first time in memory, was closed. And I think it may have been the only time it ever closed. So we went across to a hotel and in the bar I guess we could get something, but I don't remember that it was very important to us because our minds were on anything but food.

As you can imagine, the events after that day kept me at the office and at the studio and at the desk and at VOA hours and hours beyond the normal working day. But I did recall that when Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald—that was a Sunday—I had been able to get a day off for the first time. I had worked all day Saturday. We had been at church and then Jill and I joined friends for coffee and then turned on the tube and saw this incredible scene.

1964: Shellenberger Accepted for Year's Study atJohns Hopkins University's SAIS and Bologna, Italy

When I was in that job, I was asked to go to Ottawa to cover a conference of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. And during that experience reporting from Ottawa, I was introduced to the fact that at Bologna, Italy there was a slot for a USIA officer at the Johns

Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies Center which was a kind of prelude to an assignment to NATO or to our mission to the Common Market. I thought that sounded just dandy. I was fortunate in being a successful applicant.

So the three of us boarded the USS Independence in New York in July 1964 and had a most agreeable ocean trip to Naples and then unloaded the car, which I remember was a red Rambler convertible, and drove it to Bologna, a very long and arduous trip in those days because the Autostrada was completed only about half the distance towards Florence. The latter part of the trip to Florence where we overnighted was very rough and tiring and dusty. The hotel was more like a pensione and our room was hot. But in Bologna we found an apartment on the main drag, very noisy Via Inario, but within walking distance of the center and a hospital where Jill could repair when our next child was due, which would be in about four or five months.

Bologna was an important training experience for me. It not only introduced me to the issues of the Atlantic community but it provided vivid and in some cases enduring relationships with some of the most thoughtful Europeanists of those days and some time later. The faculty at the center was of such quality that when I did go on to the Common Market mission my experience at Bologna and my contacts there with the faculty made it possible for me to do the work at the mission with a great deal more confidence and perhaps effectiveness than would have been the case without the Bologna experience.

1965: Information Officer, USEC, Brussels

And in Brussels I managed to learn French to a level that made me comfortable to use it. I introduced a program—not introduced a program—I continued a program and reinforced it and expanded it, by which the Eurocrats would get international visitor grants to the United States. I considered that perhaps the most significant contribution to our work because for Eurocrats, in those days, America was not just a weekend trip, it was a major expedition.

One of the benefits of the USIS career is that you bask in reflected glory of superstars. That wouldn't happen very often in the U.S. mission to the Common Market, it was a more specialized kind of work, not as cultural but more dealing with economic and trade issues. But we did have a visit by a celebrity, Frank Borman. The Borman of those days was noted for his exploits as an astronaut. He was mobbed. It was something quite unusual to have these Eurocrats who were normally very staid and sort of standoffish and prim, and here they were busting the doors open and cramming into the downstairs of the Common Market headquarters and all, treating Frank Borman as if he were a latter-day Robert Redford.

In Brussels for four and a half years, I had seen my career develop in ways that I hadn't imagined. I remember Dan Oleksiw called me and wanted me to transfer to Tokyo to be the cultural attach#. And I said I would love to go back to Japan, but I would want to have at least two years language study, although I had studied Japanese part-time during my four years there as a junior officer. Well, Dan said, I don't know what I can do, you're on a list to go to Vietnam and this would take care of that. I said, I'll take my chances. And then sure enough I did get called, and I was told I was going to go to Vietnam, a very big job in PsyOps. I would be overseeing how many hundreds of people and it was the number three job and all that. I said, well, fine.

1968: Made Public Affairs Counselor at USEC

And then my—I was at that time the deputy to the counselor for public affairs in Brussels at the U.S. Mission to the Common Market. My boss, the counselor, was Hunt Damon, who at that time decided that the USEC operation was not really congenial to his public affairs gifts. So he went to the Ambassador, Bob Schaetzel, saying I think I'm going to have to go back to Washington and retire, I don't believe this is really satisfying to me and I've after all had a pretty long career. And he then generously proposed that I be named his successor. And Schaetzel found that congenial.

So I became the counselor and that took care of Vietnam and kept me on for another year or two. Until Henry Loomis came by. Actually he came to Paris and said would I join him in Paris, which I did, and there he said, I'd like you to consider going to Lagos, Nigeria, which would be an altogether different physical and working environment.

Q: Before you go on to your Lagos appointment, I want to ask you two questions. One, would you spend just a few minutes telling us what the main thrust of your responsibilities were with the Common Market group, because I think that's largely misunderstood by people on the outside. What do you do in the information job in the Common Market assignment? And the other is, that when Henry Loomis proposed you for Lagos, he must have been Deputy Director of the Agency.

SHELLENBERGER: Yes, right.

As Public Affairs Counselor at the U.S. Mission to the European Community, our task was to present the U.S. view and/or U.S. record and the U.S. priorities on the economic issues facing Europe and across the Atlantic. Going on at that time was the Kennedy round of major international trade negotiations. Perhaps the most ambitious trade negotiation ever attempted. It took a couple of years or more to complete. During that time we were being observed and covered by some 70 people in Brussels, journalists who were accredited to the Common Market. And this was an international group to whom we carried and conveyed our message, issue by issue by issue, whether it was the agricultural subsidies program which we had so many problems with, American soybeans, a whole range of issues that caused friction. Then on the political side, de Gaulle was taking France out of the institutions of the Common Market, boycotting them. And there was a very great question as to whether the Europe that Monnet and others had crafted was going to be realized, a European Community.

I remember President Nixon's first visit to Brussels right after his election in 1968, his first trip out of the U.S. was to Brussels to see the King, of course, but also to call on the

EC Commission. George Vest and I—George was the DCM—were very concerned that the departure statement of Nixon be one that conveys the importance we attach to the Common Market. So we looked at the proposed communique that Nixon was to read or issue on departure and George and I both thought it was lacking in terms of a resolute affirmation of the Common Market process. I think the phrasing in the original was: we believe the Common Market is in the interest of Europe. So we changed the words from “in the interest of” to “indispensable to the future of Europe.” And we got Jerry terHorst, the Deputy White House Press Secretary, because Ron Ziegler was not to be found. And Jerry rather reluctantly, approved it because there was no time to take it up with other parties. And the communique was issued. We heard later that Henry Kissinger was quite annoyed that the language had been changed to indispensable because he didn't want to annoy de Gaulle.

Q: He didn't like the thing very well.

1970: CPAO and Counselor of Embassyfor Public Affairs, Lagos, Nigeria

SHELLENBERGER: I'd been on the job in Brussels now for about four years and I got a call from Henry Loomis asking if I'd meet him in Paris. He wanted to talk to me. Well, what he wanted to talk about was the Lagos, Nigeria PAOship, which is the biggest in Africa. It would be the conventional USIS operation, as contrasted to the USEC operation. After talking it over with Jill and Katie and now Karen—who I should have mentioned, was the highlight of our Bologna stay.

She had been on the way but then was born on my birthday, December 28, 1964, in this Bologna University Hospital. Her doctor, of course, was out for the holidays and Karen was delivered by a midwife who had no English. Jill was Rh-negative so I had this grave concern that there would have to be an immediate blood transfer if the tests indicated such. So I was yelling up and down the corridor, “Rh-negativo, Rh-negativo!” And as it

turned out, it was fine and there was no transfusion required and mother and daughter did well.

And now here we were four years later, on the verge of going to Nigeria in West Africa, another totally different culture and professional experience. It was a direct transfer. The job I hold now insists that people going to post have some kind of area studies and ideally both area and language studies. But my area studies consisted of three novels that I was able to find in a Brussels bookstore, one by Chinua Achebe and one by Cyprian Ekwensi, and of course another by Wole Soyinka. And in the weeks I had to prepare for our trip, getting our shots and all that, from Brussels to Nigeria, I managed to read these. I've since decided or determined that if you're not going to get area studies, try to get a contemporary novel about the country to which you're assigned, or two or three. It can do a lot for you, filling in the gaps, especially if you don't know the region. And that certainly was the case with these books.

Q: At the time you were assigned to Nigeria, had the so-called Biafran revolution or civil war terminated? Or was it still going on?

SHELLENBERGER: We arrived on a weekend and Bill Trueheart was the Ambassador. He immediately invited us over to his residence for supper, just the Truehearts and Jill and me, Katie and Karen remained at home with the housekeeper. It was while eating that Bill said, “I think we'd better get the radio on, we've been getting all kinds of hints.” So we turned on the radio, shortwave, fooling around from channel to channel. We came across a French report that both he and I could understand that said in effect the Ojukwu party had left what was then called Biafra by some people. And we turned to the frequency of the secessionist radio station and it was playing funereal music. So, yes, I arrived just as the civil war ended.

U.S., At Time of Shellenberger's Arrival,Was Held in Low Esteem by Nigerian Government

What struck me about that period is two things. One is that the United States was in very low esteems in the eyes of the leadership of Nigeria for being at least sentimentally favoring the Ibo rebellion. And, two, the extraordinary lack of vindictiveness on the part of Nigerians of all tribal affinities in terms of letting the Ibo come back without a lot of humiliation. And indeed, I don't believe there were any executions in the aftermath of the civil war, and a great deal of generosity was shown in terms of sharing relief supplies. I often contrast that kind of attitude with what I have seen so often in so many parts of the world in the aftermath of a civil war, which is a wretched time for the loser.

Q: Not only in other parts of the world, but Africa has been particularly bloody when there's been a forcible change of administration or attempted coup. I think it was a very remarkable situation and probably a recognition of the great competence of the Ibos, who are generally considered to be the most intelligent of the African tribes in that country. [Interview interrupted]

May 12, 1990: Interview Resumed

Q: This is Lew Schmidt and we are resuming an interview which was interrupted three weeks ago. We had just reached the point where I was commenting on the fact that generally outside the Ibos are considered to be the more capable of the Nigerian tribes and therefore it's even doubly remarkable that they received such good treatment at the end of the rebellion. Jack, I think you had some different thoughts about that. Incidentally, this is May 12 when we're resuming this interview. Would you pick it up from there, then?

SHELLENBERGER: You see, the Ibos had a leg up on the other tribes, having been much more receptive to the Christianity offered by missionaries who came to Nigeria at the turn of the century, establishing educational centers, hospitals, etc. And the Ibo saw opportunities for education and took advantage of them and became the nucleus of Nigeria's civil service, both under the British and after independence. But I think the picture today is a whole lot less weighted in favor of the Ibo in terms of competence. The

Hausa, the Yoruba with a Nobel prize winning author in the person of the playwright, Wole Soyinka. The present regime is mainly of Hausa extraction and has been for a good many years. The university in the north, Ahmadou Bello, is a great clearinghouse for Hausa intellectual talent.

What I found about the Nigerians was an aggressive candor in letting you know where they're coming from. It was always refreshing to sit around in a coffee shop or a cafe and rap with them, whatever their tribal background, because it was laying it out on the table. The regime of General Gowon, which was the victor in the civil war, had maintained a very cool relationship with the U.S. Embassy. In fact, Ambassador Trueheart at the time had not been able to make any more than pro forma calls on any of Gowon's chief decision takers, but with the end of the civil war, out came first David Newsom, the Assistant Secretary for Africa Affairs, and soon after Bill Rogers in one of his early trips as Secretary of State. The Rogers visit was a great success. Rogers was able to see the leadership, including Gowon, and I felt the atmosphere changed for the better with that visit. It's one of my early recollections of how a high-level U.S. visitor can change the climate, especially in countries which are ruled by a single party or a single authority.

The doors opened a few months later even wider with the arrival in Nigeria of Davis Cup tennis stars Arthur Ashe and Stan Smith who were at the peak of their careers. They were as well known to Nigerians as they were to Americans and the elite of Nigeria were tennis players. The Smith-Ashe visit was considered to be, as was the case some years later equivalent to a visit by American astronauts or the arrival of a piece of the moon, a moon rock. All of these are the sorts of things that USIS got heavily involved in orchestrating. And I think on the whole quite successfully

Q: Did Trueheart continue on as Ambassador very long after the Roger visit? Or was he replaced, and if so by whom?

SHELLENBERGER: He was replaced I would say within three or four months of the Rogers visit, that is, toward the end of summer of 1970 by none other than John E. Reinhardt who was coming out of USIA as the Director for African Affairs. I think his three or four year tenure was probably the one in which relations between our two countries normalized to a greater extent than had been the case for some years, perhaps since independence. In Nigeria we had branch USIS posts in Kano and Kaduna in the north, in Benin City, which is right in the middle of Nigeria, and Ibadan, which is considered to be the most populated sub-Saharan city in all of Africa. USIS maintained there centers which had informational materials and films which were patronized by students, especially, and by academics and to some extent the media. One of the prized programs that we contributed to as an Agency was Floyd Arpan's program at the University of Indiana which welcomed foreign journalists for a combined study and working visit at a U.S. regional newspaper. We nominated the editor of the most independent of Lagos' many newspapers who benefited from the program and came back to Nigeria and organized a journalist study center which became an institution. His own fortunes brightened when the return to civil rule took place and he was named governor of Lagos state. As for today, I just don't know.

Q: The one and only time I came to Nigeria was shortly after you had become the PAO there. I remember I spent two or three days in Ibadan at that time. In those days the university at Ibadan was, I understand, considered the principal university of the country. Is that still the case or was it still the case when you left?

SHELLENBERGER: I would say it is second probably to Lagos University by virtue of Lagos' proximity to the present-day capital. But all this can change if the Lagos administrative capital is shifted to another part of the country, more central part of the country. That move is supposedly in progress but it is rather slow. Ibadan no doubt was the intellectual center of Nigeria with people like Soyinka and others pretty much rooted there. And when visiting scholars came to Nigeria, it was Ibadan to which they headed.

Ibadan also is the home of a tropical agricultural institute which is funded by the Ford Foundation and has been doing outstanding work in crop productivity and eradication of pests and other problems.

One of my—I suppose I had made three very close friends in Nigeria that continued well after I left. Babatunde Jose was the editor and publisher of the Lagos Daily Times, which was the paper of record, if there is a paper of record. Cyprian Ekwensi. Cyprian is an Ibo. He had survived during the war; he didn't leave the country as Chinua Achebe did but Cyprian, like Chinua, was a very well known novelist. And after the war he was given the state library to oversee. And of course I was helpful in getting reference materials for that library. We became good friends and he would come to Lagos periodically and we would do the town. In Lagos, doing the town begins at 11:30 at night. And then it's still pretty early for the bars. They really started happening at 1:00 in the morning or after. And that was great fun.

The other friend was from Benin City and he was the editor of the newspaper there. His name was Pious Agun. He also was a writer, and a highly idealistic man with whom I felt total rapport. So there were three people in the communication arts, if you will.

I remember when we organized an African writers conference, Cyprian was in the forefront of that effort. From the United States came John Updike and his wife at that time. I looked for some feedback from that two or three day event in Updike's subsequent work, including The Coup, but there's no trace of his Nigerian experience in his subsequent writing.

Q: Do you think that Updike used the general African background that he found in Nigeria as a leader or base for his work The Coup or did it seem not to be related at all?

SHELLENBERGER: It didn't seem related at all, as I looked through The Coup.

Q: I read the book but it's been a number of years now and I've rather forgotten. It seemed like a sort of comic opera kind of treatment.

SHELLENBERGER: Oh, yes. It was—whereas he was all seriousness at the conference. And I think he was doing a lot of listening as he heard from fellow writers and their agonies. He was again like Ashe and Smith but in a different way, tremendously successful as a personality.

Our stay in Nigeria, 1970 to '73, coincided with the oil boom and by the time we left Nigeria was awash in the stuff and importing like crazy. We would go out to Tarkwa Bay where the best beaches were and look out in astonishment at the waiting line of freighters, endless number of freighters, waiting admission to the port to offload what the big money had ordered, Mercedes or the like. And the demobilization of the military troops after the war of course meant there was a lot of unemployment. These people had retained their weapons, so security deteriorated rapidly. There were constant break-ins. We went on home leave to an SPCA farm and brought back a Labrador retriever who was the gentlest thing in the world, but just the presence of an animal like that would deter people from entering our yard.

As '73 turned, I was wondering what next would be on my plate. I had been offered a Deputy Directorship for the East Asia area a year before, but I wanted to work with John Reinhardt another year and so I said I'd stay. Now there wasn't a similar opportunity. Finally they called and said there's a policy job at the Voice, which I was reluctant to take because I had always felt that policy articulation can be a very subjective thing, and when it is decreed from across town, as was the case in those days, this is what you will do and this is what you won't do, without a whole lot of why, you felt like you were being a mouthpiece, a peddler of somebody else's product and not being in on its creation.

Q: Before we go into the continuation of your thought there, I'd like to ask a couple more questions about Nigeria. Some of them are substantive and one or two of them are more just factual. Was English still the prime language of the country? Was it the official language?

SHELLENBERGER: Yes, it was the official language and it was the prime language. It was taught everywhere. And would remain so in my view because if one or another of the languages spoken in Nigeria were to rise ahead of the others, it would engender lots of feelings of resentment.

Q: How long did it take for whatever bitterness remained from the war to more or less dissipate? First of all, with reference to the American point of view, and secondly with reference to the natural feeling of resentment that might pertain against the Ibos by virtue of their insurrection?

SHELLENBERGER: There would be scattered instances where Ibo communities would be attacked. But usually based on misinformation. Nigeria is a country of marketplaces where the rumor mill is constant. And rumors feed upon rumors and can lead to flare-ups. It may be Hausa directed, it may be Ibo directed, it may be Yoruba. But as the months passed I felt that the overriding animosity dissipated and was displaced by the more localized flare-up, based on maybe an accusation that somebody stole or somebody charged the wrong price. Or a clandestine radio broadcast that said Ojukwu's coming back. That was broadcast on April 1 one year and it was an April Fool's thing. But it was taken seriously by some people.

Attitude Toward U.S. Gradually Improved in Early '70s

As for the U.S., I thought we were on a continual rise from the moment I arrived, having nothing to do with me, but the receptivity to us and to our policies was more and more apparent.

George Bush, Then U.S. Ambassador to UN,Visits Lagos

George Bush was the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and he came to Nigeria. We thought this was going to be a very tough visit because George in the UN had made of course known that we were anti-apartheid, but taking sweeping sanctions against the

regime was at that time not American policy and we were fairly isolated, at least in terms of how black Africa felt. There was a roundtable arranged at the Center for Foreign Affairs in Lagos which would feature George Bush defending U.S. policy. You can imagine the number of movers and shakers who wanted to get into that event and would be ready to tear him to pieces, at least verbally.

I remember a ranking member of the regime was Col. Obasanjo who later became the head of government in Nigeria. He was articulate and vehement, but George Bush was also articulate, and also very steady. And as they talked, I saw the character of the negotiator in Bush more magnified than at any other even in which I had been in his presence. He was in the mode of, “Come, let us reason together.” And pretty soon Obasanjo's rhetoric began to modify and by the end of two hours the two were if not in agreement there was a sense of understanding and respect and let us work together to sort of carve out a relationship between ourselves that will tend to ameliorate the condition in South Africa. It was quite an unusual—well, quite a display of statesmanship on the part of the then-American Ambassador to the UN. Barbara Bush was with him, and because I believe Mrs. Reinhardt was away, Jill had a lot to do with Barbara Bush, at least a good chunk of her schedule. I remember coming home as Barbara Bush was leaving a luncheon that Jill had organized and I talked to her a bit. Jill told me later what a refreshing and warm personality she had been with this group of high achieving Nigerian women, that she was really a trooper. And this was not the first stop, this was well into a tour of some duration.

Another personality I should mention is now the president of the General Assembly of the United Nations. His name was Joe Garba. He was head of Gowon's, not palace guard, but his special security group. Garba's great love was basketball. I discovered there was an ex-Peace Corps basketball coach teaching in the sports program at Ahmadou Bello University in Kaduna. And he came—Garba arranged for him to come down to do something in the barracks where the head of state was living and to help with their basketball program. I mentioned the idea of bringing the Peace Corps back. The Peace

Corps had been unwelcomed in Nigeria since the start of the civil war because the volunteers had been active in the Ibo area. Why not a sports Peace Corps program? Well, that would fly. I believe the next year they brought in 5 Peace Corps sports specialists.

Now I'm to the VOA?

Q: Couple of more questions. What did you think was the main thrust of your policy program in the Nigerian country while you were there? What were you trying to achieve in addition to improving the reputation of the United States in the period just after the civil war?

SHELLENBERGER: Well, clearly to promote reconciliation, and to do so by explaining what the United States intentions were with respect to Nigeria and Africa in general. They were objectives with which Africans could find some solace.

Q: Did you have anything to do with trying to explain our policies with reference to South Africa at that time? Other than the Bush session that you just discussed.

SHELLENBERGER: The Agency arranged for a group of I think seven PAOs from various parts of Africa to go to South Africa and spend two or three weeks meeting with all of the opinion groups and to go to Soweto, to go to the heart of the Afrikaans institutions. We met with the liberal people, Suzman, and we met with Alan Payton. So we had a very full picture of what was going on in that society and came back sorely troubled by it and not sanguine as to what was going to happen.

Now whether that equipped me to defend U.S. policy in Southern Africa, I don't know. But I do know that our Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, who had been my predecessor in Nigeria, Bev Carter, tall, good-looking Black American, had gone to South Africa and preached the anti-apartheid gospel. And that of course was replayed throughout Africa, and I think was a very real help to our image with respect to that issue.

1973: Return to VOA as Voice Policy Officer

Q: Is there anything else you think you want to say about your Nigerian experience now before we go on to VOA?

SHELLENBERGER: I'm sure there's lot, but I think we ought to move on. The VOA policy job was quite horrible, in my view. First of all, you have to be there at 7:00 or 7:15. And the first thing you did was read folders of overnight cables about this and that. And then the phone would ring and it would be uptown calling me saying: “All right, this is what you're going to treat today, this is what you're not going to treat today. And we didn't like what one of the VOA commentators said yesterday so don't let that happen again.” And all this in an imperious way.

Q: This would be from the Agency?

SHELLENBERGER: Yes, from the Agency, and the Agency would be getting it from the State Department, or so they pretended. I think a lot of it was gut feelings.

SHELLENBERGER: They loved to flog the VOA. It wasn't animosity towards me, but the feeling that the VOA as an institution was too independent and constantly getting the U.S. into trouble. Then the commentators would come along. In those days, they all wrote and broadcast under their own names. And these veterans for the most part would find it very demeaning to give me their 3-minute commentary in order for me to see if it's all right or not in policy terms. So they resented me . . . kind of a no-win proposition.

Early 1974 Study of VOA Made at Requestof USIA Director James Keogh

Ed Schechter and you and Jack O'Brien were the threesome who began to find out what was going on in the VOA's front office, in light of constant I guess musings or whisperings or scuttlebutt. I was rather oblivious to it.

But the study was done in rapid time, I think it was done within two, three months. Incredible.

Q: We actually were supposed to do it in two months and we did ask for another week because we felt we hadn't finalized our analysis completely. We had to go back and discuss it. There was some difference of opinion among us. So it took about two months and ten days and we got the thing in.

Reorganization of VOA Following Study. ShellenbergerBecomes Program Officer

SHELLENBERGER: It got in and then there was, some call it the Night of the Long Knives because there were wholesale changes in the front office of VOA, not the director but the deputy director was sent out; the special assistant of the director was sent out; the program director was, let's say, invited to look elsewhere for employment; the head of news and current affairs went out. And suddenly there was light at the end of my tunnel, because I was dubbed to be the program director.

Q: May I just intervene at this point for a moment. You probably know, although you didn't want to say so I guess, that Keogh had been very dissatisfied with Ken Giddens as director of the Voice. He thought this study might be a vehicle for asking Ken to move on. It turned out that Ken's political connections were a lot better than those of Mr. Keogh and as a result Ken stayed on not only through the balance of the then current administration but imposed himself for two or three months into the next one before he was more or less forcibly told he had to get out.

SHELLENBERGER: Well, it was awkward, to put it mildly. But I surely liked what I was doing as program director. I brought Mike Brown in to do the policy chores, and Mike being amiable and a very gifted journalist, had more rapport, I'd say, with our VOA commentators than I did, and could hint at modifications of their texts without their knowing they were being diddled, or at least turned around. He was a master at it.

VOA's Difficulties in Handling News ofWatergate and President Nixon's Resignation

And I of course was caught up in the events of the day which included first of all the Agnew story and resignation, the enveloping Watergate crisis which put the VOA very much on the spot as to how far it would go with respect to unsourced material, condemning the administration, condemning Nixon. We found a modus vivendi—some didn't like it but I think it was fair—that we would not go with any unattributed comment. To use “the White House source said,” or “a high official in the U.S. government said,” or “a Congressional source said,” was a no-no. I wanted it to be so-and-so said, and that became our policy. And I think it was fair.

VOA Correspondents Abroad RemovedFrom Diplomatic Status

At that time we were building up a network of VOA correspondents around the world. And these were mainly journalists who felt restrained by being journalists and U.S. government officials at the same time. Alan Heil and I charted the course that would take the VOA correspondents off the diplomatic list and make them working journalists abroad just like anybody else, without the privileges of government-supplied housing, without access to commissaries, with ordinary passports. And I think it was very salutary. It was, I am sure, given a boost by the Percy Committee investigations which found that VOA news was being, what's the word, stifled or even in some cases manufactured to serve administration ends. The term rocket comes to mind. Rocket in VOA parlance meant an incoming cable from one or another U.S. embassy around the world that had heard a VOA newscast or VOA report that had ruffled the feathers of the host government.

Q: Was this before the emancipation, you might say, of the correspondents or afterwards?

SHELLENBERGER: This was before the emancipation of the correspondents and it was before the final decision by the Congress to establish a mandate for the VOA news to be accurate and to be free of interference.

Q: This raises a couple of questions in my mind. I would think that if the embassy and the host country had been disturbed by a broadcast from the VOA that it might have been because the correspondents in the field had reported too accurately what the situation was rather than the fact that they might have toned down or otherwise obscured the situation. That's my first question.

SHELLENBERGER: That's very true. The correspondents would be going into a village in Cambodia and seeing it destroyed and report that, and the embassy would find that report not in the U.S. interest and would rocket back to Washington saying, don't carry it again. Or warn that correspondent to stay away from territory that the embassy determines is off the reservation.

Q: I know that the correspondents in the field, several of them at least, not all of them but several of them— Sean Kelly was one of the principal protagonists—wanted this so-called liberation. It would seem to me that after they got it there might have been more of that direct and objective reporting than there was while they were still part of the USIA establishment.

SHELLENBERGER: I would agree that once emancipated they were perhaps less likely to go for the scoop. That sounds strange, but being under some restraints, and Sean Kelly was a good example, you look for opportunities that would give you the edge over somebody else as a way of testing the system, or at least stretching the tolerance level to the point that it would contribute to the ultimate emancipation. And once emancipation arrived, there wasn't that necessity to buck.

Q: The other question I have in that connection is that if the correspondents were objecting because what they were sending in from the field was getting tamped down once it hit Washington, would there be any less possibility of that happening once they were liberated and reporting not as diplomatic representatives but as individual correspondents in the field? It would seem that since the VOA was under the same kind of restraint insofar as

policy guidance was concerned, that there wouldn't have been much difference in the treatment at this end than there had been no matter what the status of the people abroad was.

SHELLENBERGER: I guess the problem is you can't generalize with respect to correspondents. Each one was different and each one had strengths and each one had weaknesses. I would say what was common to all of them was their zest to be on the beat and to go after the story, whether it meant being in very dangerous situations, as was the case as the Vietnam war turned. As individuals, that zest for the story was a common denominator. But how it was manifested or how it was translated into accurate and non-sensational reporting varied from individual to individual. What the case is now, I don't know. I think in most international episodes where the VOA is featured, it is to the VOA's credit. And certainly in terms of East Europe and the China reporting of last year, the VOA reputation has remained very high.

Q: I don't know how long you were still in the program director's position on the Voice after the correspondents were cut loose overseas, but was there any diminution in their complaint that the Voice in its broadcast was playing down what they were doing or not giving the story as it really was reported? I know there was some of that in the earlier days.

SHELLENBERGER: My last days in the VOA were in 1977. And the changing government in Portugal was a major story. I had been in Lisbon to recruit a staff for a new Portuguese service to Europe of VOA, so that VOA was in a growth mode. And that also included correspondents who were being dispersed throughout the United States as well as overseas. I don't recall instances of feeling a servitude to the Agency. I think there's always resentment of the budgetary process in which USIA would take the VOA budget and say, you've got to come up with so-and-so savings. Well, as I say, we're trying to have a growth mode at the VOA, and uptown, as it was called, was trying to carve savings out of the VOA budget. So there was that kind of inter-institutional tension.

As Watergate neared its conclusion with the resignation of the President, sure I had some of our commentators and correspondents feeling that they were being muzzled in terms of treating the Watergate story. The position uptown was that other things are happening in the world, and, in fact, most of the world doesn't care about Watergate and you're making too much of it. I don't know. I remember the day that Nixon resigned, I ordered two commentaries, one that would be used in the event that he did not resign and the other to be used if he did resign. They were kept in my desk drawer until the moment the words escaped the lips of the President that he was resigning and then we got the right commentary and got it on the wires and got it onto the air and I tore up the other one.

I think, I guess Time magazine came to me one day in answer to a complaint by a VOA correspondent in Vienna that he had been frustrated by the Agency in attempting to travel to Eastern Europe. There were some prohibitions about correspondents going into Eastern Europe, going into the Soviet Union. And I think we, Jock Shirley and I and one other from the VOA talked with—Strobe Talbott of Time about our policy toward VOA correspondents.

It was a reasoned discussion without any fallout that made the VOA appear to be unreasonable in its treatment of correspondents. I think it helped feed the notion that they would be better off without diplomatic status than with, and that's what happened.

The 1975 Fall of Vietnam—Evacuation From Saigon

I guess the fall of Vietnam, the collapse of Laos in terms of U.S. interests, the resignation of the President, all these were events that kept us busy, on the phone, many, many weekends in the office. It was a very exciting, a very stimulating, a very in some ways depressing period. But our institutions prevailed. And it was New Orleans, I guess, that the fateful words of Jerry Ford were carried to an audience. I had received a call from Philomena Jurey, our White House correspondent, who was with the President in New Orleans, and she said, “I've got an advance of the President's speech tonight where he says, 'let's put Vietnam behind us' and can I go with it? I think it's terrifically important.”

And I said, no, not until he says it. That was a disappointment to Philomena Jurey because everybody else was going with it. I said, I feel that the President, until he says it, we should not anticipate it. She said, well, I could say in a speech prepared for delivery. I said, no, it could be that that speech, even as you and I speak, may be undergoing revision because that will be a very important signal. He said it.

And then it was a matter of getting our people out of harm's way, including VOA correspondents and VOA stringers in Vietnam. I got a call at home from the air base outside Saigon by I think Wayne Corey.

Q: That was Ton Son Nut?

SHELLENBERGER: Yes, Ton Son Nut Air Base, and he said, we'd like to bug out, not necessarily for our own sake but for our Vietnamese staff. He said we can't get anybody in the Embassy to pay any attention to us. And what do we do? Because we've got an option to go out. I said, go out. And they did.

Q: They left immediately from Ton Son Nut?

SHELLENBERGER: Yes. They had an opportunity to get out. By that time the chaos was just about to begin. Have you done Alan Carter oral history?

Q: We have not.

SHELLENBERGER: Well, he—those were the days of Alan Carter and Graham Martin.

Q: I know. Martin had nothing but vitriol for Alan Carter, I remember. But I won't go further than that.

1977: Assignment to Iran

SHELLENBERGER: So that was, those are the highlights of my years with the VOA in '73-'77. I had been looking forward to another posting overseas and I know Cliff Forester had thought that I might take Manila. There was the opportunity to take the PAOship in Paris and I think my tilt was toward the Paris job because I had had 5-1/2 years of West Europe involvement not too long ago. But then one day the Director called me in, Keogh, and I guess Gene Kopp was with him. Just the three of us. And he said, we want you to go to Iran because from our point of view, U.S. point of view, Tehran is more important these days than Paris or Manila certainly. And I said, well, I feel very inadequate to go to an area and into a culture I know nothing of. Don't worry, you're a fast study. I had inspected Laos and Israel a couple of years before and on our way from Laos to Israel we stopped in Tehran and stayed with Gordon Winkler, the PAO. He showed me this variegated USIS structure that included a huge institute for teaching English, and a printing shop which is one of the best in Iran which produced our monthly magazine in another building. And in a third building in northern Tehran, great art galleries and more English teaching and the Abraham Lincoln library, a gorgeous facility. The set-up in North Tehran with the library had these galleries that were used to hang works of local artists or imported art shows and highly impractical for any other use, they were so high, the ceilings were so high they didn't lend themselves for conference events.

Q: It's very interesting that PAOs have had a completely different opinion as to the value of the library and the Center; and of the general programs carried out there at different times. Bernie Anderson was greatly impressed with their operation but that was the day when the center was downtown and apparently available to everybody. By the time Gordon Winkler got there, the new one which you speak had been built up on the hill. He felt that it was not very productive and that USIA was spending far too much money on it because it was out from the area where most users could have full access, and in addition only the elite was ever using it.

SHELLENBERGER: That certainly was my impression. And my comment to Sandy Rosenbloom, who was my fellow inspector in 1975, was here's a post that I don't want to ever have to inspect, or to run. And now two years later there I was, saluting and saying, yes, sure, I'll do it. But I was not eager to go to Iran. And on arrival I found it dismaying in many ways. The conversations at most of the receptions and cocktail parties and dinners among Iranians had to do with what they had bought in the United States by way of property and how close were they to getting a green card in order to go to the United States permanently. That's the sort of banter that one finds troubling and depressing in a country that looks superficially like California, whose cities beyond Tehran are garden cities. A culture of great dimension and depth.

1977: Situation in Tehran Was Very Unsettled—And Unsettling

The other bothersome thing for me on arrival was to discover that not only did I have a car that was armored with special plastic, meaning you can't roll down the window, but also a bodyguard with the driver in the front seat who puts his .45 right there between himself and the driver. I wasn't fearful but I just found it put the society in some question as to what it was about and where it was going.

1978: Shellenberger Felt USIS Program Could Not Be Very Effective Under Such Conditions. Recommended Program Be Reduced. Washington Upset

As the time passed in Tehran I felt more and more bearish about the ability of USIS to do much with anyone who was not already converted, and proposed that there be significant reduction in the USIS operation. Well, that rang bells in Washington and somebody was dispatched to see what had gone wrong with this PAO who is cutting back the AMPART program by more than a third and who was suggesting that we didn't really need this or that. I remember we had the meeting with the Washington representative for whom there was no such word as no. And no such words as it can't be done. It can be done and will be done. Events soon proved the likelihood that we were going to be reducing because the

riots that began in early '78 and then crescendoed until the end of '78 meant that we were going to be drawing down. I believe by the fall, late fall, we had dropped the three positions from USIS that I proposed a year earlier.

Q: Had Bill Sullivan come in as Ambassador by that time?

SHELLENBERGER: Sullivan arrived shortly before I did in July of 1977. So, yes, he was there. He I'm sure did not expect this to be the culmination of his career, his distinguished career, but it was. He had the misfortune of being on home leave through three months of the summer '78 when the concept that things were falling apart was being demonstrated day by day.

U.S. Policy Re Iran in Summer of '78 Disorganized— Chaotic. And President Carter's Performance During His Tehran Visit on New Year's Eve, 1978, Was Unfortunate.

Gary Sick, in a book called “They All Fall Down” has a very vivid account of the relationship between the organs in Washington and the Embassy in Tehran as to what was being exchanged and who was really making policy and where was consensus? Well, there wasn't. Brzezinski had his agenda as National Security Adviser; the State Department had a different view; the White House had, in the form of Carter, because Carter had this weird rapport with the Shah and the Shahbanou. He had a White House lawn welcoming ceremony amidst tear gas. I'm not sure that's happened with any other major ruler, being forced off the balcony because of the clouds of tear gas. And then not long afterwards having the Carters stop in Tehran on New Years Eve of 1978 and throwing away all the material that had been prepared by way of what he might say in a toast, throwing it all away and pronouncing Iran an island of stability in a sea of chaos.

Q: This had been primarily USIA prepared material that had been made for his use?

SHELLENBERGER: Combination political and USIA. We were in the drafting loop and I'm not sure who—because there was also somebody writing in Washington for him. So

like most of these visits by presidents, the mix of words that goes into the final speeches comes from many players. But I think Carter was in such rapture at being in this palace among this friendly family, the Pahlavis he felt, well, this guy has got it together and he won't fall, he'll survive.

Q: You mentioned the divergence of opinion in different areas in Washington. What was your feeling as to Sullivan's point of view vis-a-vis what was coming out of Washington, out of the State Department and out of wherever else in Washington?

SHELLENBERGER: Well, in the first half of his time there—now understand, he was only there for less than two years—he was feeling pretty spunky. He'd been given his marching orders. As he puts it in his book, the thing that Carter wanted him to do first, as soon as he got there, was to make sure that the Westinghouse people got the go-ahead in their bid on building several nuclear reactors in Iran, and that secondly that he help the White House persuade Congress that the sale of AWAC planes to Iran be approved. This was parallel with the Nixon concept of Iran being our strategic listening post in the region, and especially looking at Soviet machinations. And indeed Iran was a listening and observation post looking North to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately it did not look closely into south Tehran.

So Sullivan had a succession of Congressional people, high level people, coming to Tehran because Tehran and Iran by the rhetoric of the times was America's important player in the region. Indeed, we had some 48,000 military whether under contract or in civilian roles, training Iranians, an enormous number of helicopter technicians. The American community in Iran was huge. It was very insulated, had its own playgrounds and its own school and its own TV station with American fare. The average American could come to Iran and never know that there was anything untoward in the city or in the country.

Q: In other words, the Americans did not live among the Iranians. They lived almost entirely in an American ambience.

SHELLENBERGER: They may have lived among the Iranians, but I learned something else about Iran. It is a country of high walls. The first thing you do when you acquire a property is put a wall around it. A house is less important than the wall. The wall keeps out. So they may have been within an Iranian community, but those walls were there. And the wall, mentally, certainly closed off the kind of contact that is possible and does happen in other societies.

Q: Do you feel that Sullivan in the later stages of his incumbency there sensed the ongoing fall of the Shah? Did he become pretty well convinced that this was all going downhill to ruin?

SHELLENBERGER: In Gary Sick's book he portrays Sullivan as being ambivalent. Some cables he's very optimistic about the Shah, having just visited him and reassured that the Shah is composed and that he is making the sorts of changes that are going to withstand or at least deter those who would seek his overthrow. But then he would privately perhaps in back channel cables say the thing is hopeless and we should start cutting a deal with the opposition people. The Shah got wind of that and he turned to Brzezinski who had a special relationship with the Shah, or at least the Shah so thought, and by the end of 1978 the mission of Dutch Hyser, a General from NATO who had at one time been the head of the U.S. military assistance group in Tehran, was dispatched by Brzezinski to see if there was a military solution to the disorder. And Hyser describes in his interesting book how the military had been groomed to be independent of each other. Each reported to the Shah but they were not used to being a collegial body, it was not like the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and to get them to agree on anything—.

Q: You mean independent, you're talking about the air force versus the army versus whatever other branch they had? Or individual generals, high ranking officers within the military acting differently, thinking differently?

SHELLENBERGER: The high ranking officers had little knowledge of what the other was doing and little knowledge of where the other was coming from. Each sought to ingratiate himself with the Shah and the Shah kept them as counters, the air force countering the navy and the army countering the air force. They were kept in these rigid separate cones, so to speak, and here's Hyser trying to find out if there's a consensus among them as to what to do about what's happening in the streets. Some had the idea: let's play hardball; but others were not convinced that that would work. I know that Sullivan felt that some kind of transition was inevitable away from the Shah's rule, and that turning the military loose, the Army loose, on those in the streets would mean just no end of bloodshed. There already had been plenty of that.

It was approaching a nightmare. Also, there was something bizarre to have Hyser in one office reporting to Brzezinski on what he was finding and in another office Sullivan reporting to the State Department on his thinking and the two phones seemingly not connected. The division of reportage coming from the Embassy in Tehran confirmed in the Shah's mind that the United States didn't know where it was coming from.

Though Many People Expected the Revolution,They Did Not Anticipate Its Religious Base

Q: I've heard some people say that even though they were convinced that a revolution of some sorts was coming and that the Shah was going to fall, that there was very little appreciation on anybody's part that it was going to be the kind of religious dominated enterprise that finally occurred. Does that correspond with your view of the thing?

SHELLENBERGER: The question is discerning. And to give you an example of how we misread the religious ferment is the arrival one day in my office of Jonathan Randal of the Washington Post. He said, I hear this name Khomeini, Khomeini. What can you tell me? What information do you have about this Khomeini? He was in Iraq at that time. And it was clear we had nothing on Khomeini. The files on the Ayatollah had ended at the time of his departure from Iran in the early '60s. He had gone into exile and then according to our

official knowledge to virtual seclusion. And so here he was resurfacing a decade or more later on and nobody knew. Nobody knew about him or his followers.

The Embassy was under the impression that the Shah had, up until '77, had been paying the mullahs sufficiently to keep them at bay. But he had eased up on those payments, or perks, and the sense of the religious community was that the Shah's program for the future would further erode their influence in education and in the culture. And to the Westerner, the answer is, well why not? That's modernization, modernization is good. It means roads and schools and hospitals. But that's not necessarily shared by people who are of a different culture. So that, no, we were sanguine about the Shah and his modernization and did not count the mosque as being anything more than a place where the unemployed would come and get shelter.

Q: As the pressure against the Shah, the discontent, began erupting into riots and bloodshed, who was it expected would be the, you might say, the "point people" in the revolution against the Shah if it came?

SHELLENBERGER: There were two so-called point groups. One were the Bazaari, the people who ran the bazaars, the merchant class, the wheelers and dealers. And the other were the remnants of the National Front, which represented a stream of political thinking dating back to the Mossadegh era in the late '40s and early 1950s. The National Front had a Socialist bent; the Shah thought they were infiltrated by the Communists and therefore watched them carefully through his secret service. But the Embassy under Sullivan's prodding tried to get to know the Bazaari and the remnants of the National Front and the other intellectuals who seemed to have some vision for an Iran that would be freer and still, if not a military ally, have at least a stable relationship with the United States.

The problem was it left out the whole Khomeini equation. And by the time we began to consider what to do about his group, his inner circle, Khomeini was now in Paris, his every word was picked up on cassette and the cassettes were played in every mosque

throughout the country. Interesting, the BBC was the first I think to park a correspondent beside Khomeini's house in the Paris suburbs and reported in Farsi every day on what went on.

Q: Was there any admonition as far as the Embassy was concerned that the Embassy and staff generally and USIA particularly, or part of the Embassy staff, should not consort with the religious group, should not get themselves mixed up with them. I've heard it said that there was some feeling on the part of the Embassy that we should stay clear of the Mullahs.

SHELLENBERGER: There was a certain nervousness in the Shah's Palace when reports would circulate that Americans were seen hobnobbing with mullahs and other dissidents. But I think they were more concerned, as we were, with our approaches and overtures to the Bazaari and the National Front, thinking, from the Shah's point of view, that these represented a potential for leftist influence and we, looking at it not as an alternative to the Shah but as a potential threat to the stability of our relationship. Yes, we were somehow not admonished but I remember the warning, as it were, a warning that came to one of my colleagues whose husband was teaching English, that his job might be in jeopardy because of the people he and his wife were seeing who were National Frontish-liberal types.

The problem in dealing with the religious community goes back to one of the basic lacks of the Foreign Service. People with language skills and the cultural awareness in that Embassy were few and far between. I remember getting Barry Rosen to come over as Press Officer because he had Farsi, reading and spoken knowledge. It was a great effort, full of bureaucratic hurdles, because he was not in the Foreign Service. But we got him there finally in November of 1978 when everything was going down.

Q: It turned out rather unfortunately for him.

1979: Shah Had Left the Country; Khomeini HadReturned; Street Riots, Embassy Under Siege

SHELLENBERGER: For him it was a double whammy because the first whammy occurred right after the total breakdown of public order in February and after some days of chaos he and I ventured to the Embassy in an ordinary (my driver's own personal) car, so as to not be seen in an official vehicle. And we were in the Ambassador's anteroom when shots were heard. Eventually we crawled down the corridor to the communications vault where we all, maybe 30 of us, hunkered down and shredded paper and waited to see what the government, which was installed at that time—.

Q: Had the Shah fallen?

SHELLENBERGER: The Shah had gone off for what he said was a vacation but no one believed he would ever return, not at least without some kind of a bloodbath. We were immobilized in this—it was again surreal. We had telephone contact with the Foreign Ministry and also with Washington from that vault, describing our plight. The government of Bazargan (installed by Khomeini) was saying, don't worry, it's one of these lawless groups. Well, every block had a lawless group, it was anarchy. And sure enough, the group that had invaded the Embassy was seeking to kill the spies because that is what Radio Peace and Progress was broadcasting and urging the people of Tehran to do. Peace and Progress, of course, was the Communist Party's radio station that for years was the most bellicose and most given to disinformation.

USIA Name Change to USICA Unfortunate;Revolutionaries Immediately Branded It As CIA Spy Nest

Q: Who were they identifying as the spies?

SHELLENBERGER: The Americans in the Embassy were a nest of spies and Satan's den. We in the meantime, by the way, had contributed to the negative image by changing the

name of the USIA to USICA. The USICA was immediately perceived to be, well, that's the CIA, that's the building. My building was USICA and my building was therefore the spy headquarters for Iran for the United States of America. And even though we took down the sign, the posters around our building all pointed arrows at us. My Farsi language instructor no longer could come to my building to teach because she was so fearful of what might happen there.

Getting back to the vault, in due course we surrendered, even though at least one security officer who had a shotgun said, let's just open the door, I'll plug them, I'll at least get some of them before they get us. Well, Sullivan said, just put your weapon over there with the others. We had gas masks on at that time because the tear gas that the Marines had tried to use had now come up through the crack under the door of the vault.

We were paraded down the hall to the Ambassador's anteroom where it all began and then sure enough, another shot or two and we were all under tables and desks. I remember the desk I got under had been graced by a Molotov cocktail just sitting there like an ashtray next to the typewriter.

Then we learned that there had been a deal struck. Those who had invaded the Embassy would be permitted to leave quietly without punishment if they would release us. And indeed that is what happened. We were paraded down the stairs, out to a courtroom, the final remnants of the deal were consummated, that is, the invaders were able to leave one by one, always keeping one there with his gun to shoot the Ambassador, shoot some of us, if any of his colleagues had been seized.

We then walked over to the Ambassador's residence. This time we weren't herded, we walked on our own, and a head count was taken to determine who was missing, who was hurt. And of the hurt ones, I believe there were two workers in the commissary were shot dead.

Q: These were Iranians or Americans?

SHELLENBERGER: No, they were Pakistani.

Q: Pakistani.

SHELLENBERGER: There were many third-country nationals in Iran because there was a lot of money and Iranians didn't like to do the kind of scud work that goes with a country that is fast modernizing. So imported labor was used, it was cheaper. And it caused, again, more resentment among the Iranians that their people in the rural villages would flood into the cities and discover that there aren't any jobs even though one out of every four Tehrani had an automobile.

Rioting Temporarily Calms Down; ShellenbergerLeaves for Consultation in Washington

The Ambassador's house had been trashed. It was just vandal-like work. Anything that could be destroyed was. The only thing I remember that wasn't touched was the grand piano. And I found myself once again under it after some further random shooting occurred. A Marine was one of those injured and was in the hospital.

In due course, Sullivan and I and Barry walked over to the gate where a huge crowd of media had gathered. The Ambassador made a statement to one representative of the media who was let in, describing our experience.

Q: Was this the foreign media or was this the local media?

SHELLENBERGER: The local media was not evident. They were mostly foreign media as far as I could determine. He made a short statement to the effect of what had happened, that the government had sent in force to relieve us, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, a man named Yazdi, and that for all practical purposes, except for the cleanup and the Marine, the day was over.

Barry and I decided there wasn't anything more to do in the Embassy, the tear gas made entry there impossible. So we mentioned to the DCM that we were just going to go back to my place. And he said, how will you do that?

Q: You mean your office or your home?

SHELLENBERGER: My home. No, I couldn't go to the office because I had been told it had been invaded and was being held by yet another group. Barry said, We'll take a taxi, which is what we did. We walked out the back gate of the Embassy and down an alley, caught a cab. Barry has a beard and we both wore ski caps and so I don't think we looked like foreign diplomats at all, we hoped not.

In Iran, the taxis pick up people as long as they have space, if they're going in that direction. And sure enough there was a space in the front seat and in hopped a woman, middle aged, and she was carrying the latest newspaper, one of the Tehran newspapers, which headlined the invasion of the Embassy. She was telling the driver. Of course Barry knew what she was saying. She was saying, I hope they killed them all, I hope they got every one of them. We, sitting there hearing this, were grateful when she got out of the cab. The driver also echoed what the woman was saying, it's a good thing, it's treating those Americans the way they deserve. We dropped off near my residence. Walked in about 5:30 in the evening and I smelled the delicious odor of roast beef and I saw a fire crackling in the fireplace. There was no heat because oil deliveries were very few and far between.

Q: What time of the year was this?

SHELLENBERGER: February. It was cold.

Q: Pretty chilly?

SHELLENBERGER: Very chilly. But the day was now a memory. I remember calling my family who had been evacuated along with all the other Embassy families a month before and communicated with USIA. I got of course a lot of calls from the media. But it was quite a day. Memorable.

I came out of Tehran for two or three weeks R&R, but they really called it consultation, in late March. That flight to New York was memorable. The Pan Am, which had resumed flights, was absolutely, couldn't have been more helpful and gracious when we got ready to get out of there. We went to the airport very early in the morning, 5:00, still dark, in a convoy. Because again the regular forces of law and order were dispersed and each neighborhood had its own law and order.

Q: What was the military doing all this time? Anything?

SHELLENBERGER: No, the military had returned to the barracks, effectively. And the leaders had all been put in jail. They were keeping a very low profile. What you had the beginnings of were the revolutionary guards, who were armed from the arsenals that belonged to the military. And they ran the neighborhoods, as komitehs.

We got to the airport and with a lot of pushing and shoving because it was utter chaos and jammed, the Pan Am helped thread us through the various procedures. One of the revolutionary guards wanted to take my passport because he said I couldn't go, it didn't have an exit permit. Again the Pan Am agent who was Iranian knew somebody else and that person came and retained my passport. We got in the Pan Am mini-bus and were driven to this Boeing 747 and all the cabin attendants were there waiting to greet us and ushered us up into the front, first class, of this marvelous plane and served us champagne and orange juice, whatever. It was a wonderful way to go.

The group included the DCM, Charlie Naas, myself and John Stempel, a political officer, and the Time correspondent who had been through it all with us. We flew directly to Rome,

Italy where again we were given VIP treatment, taken to a special lounge for a buffet, and then taken on to New York. Bruce Van Voorst was the correspondent; Bruce and I then flew on to Washington. And I guess I was the lead-off speaker at the Director's meeting the next morning, or a morning or two later.

Those are the Tehran memories.

With Trepidation, Shellenberger Returns to Tehran in April '79;Finds the City Temporarily Near Normalcy

Q: Did you go back to Tehran at all at that time, or not?

SHELLENBERGER: After two or three weeks, yes, I went back in April with a great deal of trepidation. I had a sense it might be a one-way trip. I did not feel at all good about going back. I was fatalistic about it, and stopped in London, I remember, to enjoy some theater and dinner at Simpson's on the Strand because I didn't really think I'd get back through London again.

But I found in Iran something verging on a normalcy that I had despaired of when I left. For one, the climate had changed, the actual climate. It was spring, the weather was kinder, and there was flowers. That flowering of nature seemed to give optimism another chance. We were now a small little band of four, myself and Barry, Chris Snow who was the Iran-America Society director, and the head of the English teaching program, Scott Murbach. That program, by the way, had resumed! The teachers and students wanted to continue after the revolution. And at the Iran-America Society, the library was reopened and was functioning. So from the FSN point of view, not too much had changed. What had changed is that they all, along with all other Iranian or foreign service nationals at the Embassy, were offered permanent residence in the United States along with their severance pay.

Q: When we stopped, you had just said that the one thing that had changed was that all the local employees, the foreign nationals, had been given permanent visas to the United States.

SHELLENBERGER: And severance pay. So much of the time of my remaining four months in Tehran was to work out the FSN severance pay and their treatment. Each case had a sorrowful overtone to it because even these people had, like the rest of the Embassy, no knowledge, no sense that things were as bleak as they turned out to be. And their own fortunes were in doubt, given the fact that they had worked with the great Satan.

Khomeini Had Retired to His Home and WasTaking Little Visible Part in Government

Q: Was Khomeini in the country by then?

SHELLENBERGER: Khomeini had come back in January, right after the Shah had departed. While some had predicted he would go to his home in Qom and be quiet now that the Shah had effectively gone and all of his authority, that he would retire to do things religious rather than remain engaged in the day-to-day management of government. That was the case and that continued to be the case until the second takeover of the Embassy in November. And then he injected himself on the political scene and made himself the political arbiter of Iran.

Did government function in this interim period? Was it approachable? Obviously all new faces. I made the rounds and was received correctly if not cordially. I remember going to the Museum of Modern Art which had been a creation of the Shahbanou to get a deKooning painting back to its rightful owner in New York. And the painting was on loan to this museum, which had been closed. The people in charge, as is often the case after a revolutionary takeover, consisted of a komiteh, one of whom was a knowledgeable art curator, and the other two were simply thugs. It was very strange to deal with these people. But in point of fact, the deKooning was returned, without damage.

USIS Offices Had Been Vandalized

I similarly negotiated the return of my building. But that was a little more difficult and frightening. We met with the komiteh who had assumed responsibility for it, having been invited to tour the place accompanied by armed guards. And I'd never seen vandalism to that extent anywhere in my career. They had ripped and shredded and torn apart. Anything that was usable they had taken out. But things that they considered unusable they slashed or burned. In my office I had a photograph of William Faulkner. Faulkner rarely signed photographs; this was one to me. And it was gone, along with a film I had made in Japan called “Treasures of Japan.” These are items not replaceable. And a bottle of champagne that we were saving to celebrate someday something. It was a mess, very, very depressing.

So we—I say we, John Stempel, the Political Officer, and I sat down with this very aggressive komiteh who wanted to know exactly what went on in that building, that CIA building, and wanted the list of names of people to whom we sent the magazine, so forth. Fortunately our DRS was sufficiently broadbased so that many of those in the present new government were on our lists from the Shah's time. So they really couldn't suggest that anybody on that list was necessarily a puppet. Although that did happen later on, I understand, when all the documents that were seized when the Embassy went down in November, were pieced together and they brought cases against some of those whom the regime thought were too soft on relations with America.

The weekends were interesting because Barry Rosen had this notion that we should get out of town and go around. One of us, Scott Murbach, the English teaching specialist, had a nondescript car. So we'd get in and go off to places that were outside of Tehran and enjoy tea and palaver with the hosts. Always received cordially. Not correctly, cordially. Those were very—.

Q: Did you dare talk about anything political in those forays out into the countryside? Or were you dealing primarily with branch posts of USIA or what?

SHELLENBERGER: We were dealing, no, with villages that were around the fringes of Tehran, up in the mountains. It was nonpolitical. We did acknowledge that we were Americans and then they might mention they had a connection with America, relative. But as for the present or past regime, no. There was no animosity.

Q: Did you get any indication as to what their feelings were or were they pretty mute on the subject?

SHELLENBERGER: It was so early in the new regime's tenure that they couldn't really get a fix on what was different except that the uncertainties of the last months of the Shah's regime were dispelled. Deliveries now were taking place. The power did not go out every night as had been happening. The lines for kerosene were not as long as they had been. So there was a certain euphoria that those terrible days of uncertainty and shortages and outages were over. Of course that didn't continue very long once you had the Iran-Iraq war.

End of July '79: Shellenberger Leaves Iran for Home Leave

I left Tehran on July 31, without incident. I had a carpet that I had bought maybe a year before and I had it under my arm and I prized it. It was a carpet that I had grown to like not as a possession but as a comfort. And they suggested I had to give it up. But again, somebody in the airport knew the ropes and said I'm a diplomat and therefore can go out with his carpet. If I'd not been a diplomat, they would have taken it away from me. I flew to London and there I was, back in London which I had thought I'd never see again. By this time Chris Snow had become the Cultural Attach# in London, so I reunioned with him. And then flew on to Southern California and stayed at my brother-in-laws place, and then began home leave.

Next Assignment: Ottawa, Canada

The next assignment was Ottawa. I had been called while I was in Tehran saying, We've got your next post. It's Canada. I said, Oh? When? They said, You have to be there by the first week in September. I said, I'm supposed to be here until November 15. They said, Well, you better think that—

Q: This was when you were still in Tehran?

SHELLENBERGER: Yeah, this was in Tehran. This was early July. I thought I had too much work to do. I said I think we're beginning to find that we can deal with this government and we've gotten into the media in a more respectable way. English enrollment is up. Not that normalcy is with us, but I think we are holding the line in terms of USIS activity, we have got some space potential across the street from the Embassy which would be a kinder, gentler working environment, all this on my agenda. He listened and he said, I don't think John Reinhardt is going to be impressed by that. I think you're wanted in Ottawa and you will go to Ottawa or—. And I said, Or? And he said, Or you will leave the Agency. So that's how I went to Ottawa and therefore missed being a hostage the second time.

Short Discussion of USIS Programming BetweenApril Return and Final Departure in July '79

Q: Just a couple more questions before we go on to Ottawa. In the latter stages, what kind of program were you able to conduct in Tehran anyway? Was the Iranian-American Association functioning? And in addition to that, what were you doing? Did you have any access to the media during that time?

SHELLENBERGER: We did have—as I said, we were beginning to have access to the media. Barry Rosen was very enterprising in getting to editors and talking with them about true U.S. intention with respect to Iran and the sense that we would like to have an open

relationship and that we would like to make good on our commitments insofar as the new government wanted us to. That we were indeed! I remember vividly, interviewing people who were candidates for the USIS program, for social workers, operating in the Midwest. We had four Iranian candidates and I briefed them, we saw to their ticketing. So some exchange programs were continuing. I think we were doing the other aspects of the Agency's mission, reporting on attitudes and perceptions. I for example, went to Tehran University to look at an exhibit about the revolution and to sense how, what kind of spin that was on the exhibition vis-a-vis the U.S. And I looked American and I think they knew I was an American, but I was received with great warmth by those I met at the University. I was able to entertain. There was a curfew but if you had your guests come at 5:00 or so, it would be over by 8:00. And people would come. These were not people who were necessarily the old establishment, they were people who were in the arts, writers and musicians and that sort.

So I was not pretending that things were hunky-dory, I was just saying that I felt that Barry and I and Scott were making some difference. Some have questioned, did you really need four USIS Americans in those days after the fall of the Shah. In retrospect, I'd say of course not, but at the time it seemed that it was manageable, and that our Iranian connections wanted us desperately to be around, if for no other reason than to permit them to take advantage of educational opportunities in the United States.

Q: Had Sullivan left by that time? Or was he back in the United States on consultation and Bruce Laingen in charge? What had happened?

SHELLENBERGER: Sullivan left shortly after I returned in April and Charlie Naas continued as Charg# until Laingen came in June or July. So Sullivan was in his final consultations in Washington, which I'm sure must have been very, very painful for him because he was taking a lot of the blame for what had happened.

Q: In the period before the revolution got so serious—well, it was pretty serious all the time I guess, but before it looked as though the Shah was really going to fall—were you able to conduct a fairly ordinary or normal program? Or what were you doing at that time?

SHELLENBERGER: Oh, no. The normalcy went out of the program I would say somewhere around September of '78. I remember our last two AMPARTs as such were Shirley Hoffstetter, who was a judge from California. She went on to become Secretary of Education. She was coming in to talk about our legal system and not to impugn what was there under the Shah but at least to meet with legal scholars in the country. That program was very crowded and very well received. The other was, I remember—and it wasn't an AMPART for us as much as our facilitating the visit by the U.S. pollster Lou Harris. He had a standing- room only crowd at the Iran-America Society wanting to hear about public opinion measuring and how it differs from what is being done or not being done elsewhere in the world including Iran. I thought that was a very useful event. The other was a visit of Ambassador John Tuthill who at that time was head of the Salzburg Seminar. He was trying to encourage Iranian participation in the American Studies Seminar for the first time. That seminar had been riveted to European fellows.

So those were the last few memorable events of the normal USIS program.

Q: Prior to that time, had you had any reasonable access to the media? Or was it pretty spotty?

SHELLENBERGER: Under the Shah's regime?

Q: Yes. Up to about, say, October or November of '78.

SHELLENBERGER: It was a cinch. They bent over backwards to cover Ambassador's speeches and use our handouts. The press conferences of incoming VIPs always received very generous press.

Q: Was Barry the only one in USIA, USIS or USICA who had Farsi?

SHELLENBERGER: Barry had Farsi. Mike Cannon had taken the year course in Farsi and he was pretty competent. The Cultural Attach# had taken it but only part-time and couldn't use it. I of course didn't have it and felt very much handicapped.

Q: What I was getting at was whether or not anyone, including Rosen, was able to be out among the populace trying to pick up some idea as to what was fermenting in the background. Did you have any kind of contact with anyone in the population who could have had any real concept of what was going to happen or what was going on?

SHELLENBERGER: Oh, Barry did for sure. He had a whole range of people who were on the outs and were not part of a sophisticated elite, the American educated. And I think our Fulbrighters who—

Assignment as PAO, Ottawa: September, 1979

Q: This is Lew Schmidt interviewing Jack Shellenberger. This is now July 21, we're in Jack's office at the Foreign Service Institute. Jack, I think today we'll finish up the interview and we'll start with your assignment to Ottawa.

SHELLENBERGER: Okay, I'll be glad to respond. I'll begin with the phone call I received from Ben Fordney when I was in Tehran saying that I would be assigned to Ottawa sooner than later, and to make plans to come back and be on the job by September 1. I had thought I would stay in Tehran until November 15 and was loath to change that timetable, but it became clear that either I change that timetable or I would be without an agency connection. So I came back the end of July, out of that chaotic, no longer a kingdom, and had a few weeks of home leave and then for the first time in my career drove to my next post, that is, Ottawa. I found a place to stay overlooking the Rideau Canal, a very lovely

condominium-type apartment about a 15-minute walk to the USIS office which was located in the Press Building, or Press Club of Canada, half a block from the Embassy itself.

During my time in Ottawa I can recall vividly the three very different ambassadors under whom I served, the first being Tom Enders, a forbiddingly tall career Foreign Service Officer who had very specific ideas about USIS activities. And then, within months, a very benign and gentlemanly Kenneth Curtis, who had been governor of Maine and after that the Democratic National Chairman, who knew nothing about USIS. With the Reagan victory, in 1980, came Paul Robinson from Chicago, a tank of a man who really wanted to be I think Secretary of the Navy because his abiding interest was defense and Canada's poor performance in terms of defense modernization.

Canada was the destination of President Reagan's first state visit soon after he was elected. I remember sensing even then that the Alexander Haig role in the Reagan administration was stressful with the Secretary of State seeming to make his own agenda without much coordination with the White House. And so USIS was caught in between these different camps and these different agendas. I remember I got a call from Jock Shirley after the Reagan visit saying that Jim Brady was complaining that he didn't see enough of me. Well, that was because I couldn't find Jim Brady very often. He also had an agenda. So it was, while successful for the public's sake, the trip was a bit of a downer for me.

A month or so later I guess the Reagan assassination attempt occurred but that did not bar his returning to Canada in June for the Economic Summit. And that's when I got to know David Gergen, who was Director of White House Communications. And Gergen thought up an idea that since has characterized all the Summits, and that is to have USIS people monitor the press briefings by the other participating countries—it had never been done before—and report back to him so that the Reagan camp would have a heads up as to what was going on among the other delegations in terms of the spin they were giving as the summit progressed. We succeeded in this all to well. It meant that the following year,

1982, in preparation for the summit at Versailles David called me down to the White House to be the USIA coordinator for that summit, and indeed to go on to Bonn and Berlin as part of the White House press team. The next year, of course, was Williamsburg and I was dubbed the USIA coordinator for that, a very, very big job, of providing press facilities for some 3,000 journalists.

One of the highlights of my Canada period was getting acquainted with a student who was studying farm production and livestock. His name was Paul Sim and his family owned a farm in Saskatchewan, to which he invited me. I went there with daughter Karen out on the plains, and learned about harvesting grain, driving a truck next to the combine as it spewed the grain into the back of the truck, making sure I didn't turn left and destroy very expensive equipment. It was an eye-opening experience to get some sense of the culture of the prairies.

During my Canada days also I did a lot of amateur theater. Ottawa had a seemingly near professional group called Ottawa Little Theater and I managed to be cast in as many as eight different productions. I certainly found that a wonderful avocation.

What differentiated Canada from my other career locales was that it seemed my best friends were also in many cases my most important contacts. That doesn't happen in our business too often, but it certainly happened to me in Canada. And it gave me, I think, insight as to how to handle the abiding issues that caused resentment in Canada towards the United States on trade and investment, cross border TV, fishing rights, and acid rain. These, along with defense, were the kinds of issues that we had to contend with.

Margaret Atwood and Robinson Davies are two of the great names in literature and again the Canadian environment is such that you can make overtures to and make contact with celebrated people with greater ease than is the case in other countries and cultures. For me the opportunity to eat a dinner in the company of such individuals, hear their ideas, was extremely rewarding.

Then Canada of course had USIS representation in Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto, which gave me quite a vast territory to roam through. It was always a pleasure to go out to Vancouver, especially in the cold months, getting away from what is said to be the coldest capital in the world after Ulaanbaatar.

Q: Even worse than Moscow?

SHELLENBERGER: Yes it is, it's colder than Moscow.

After two or three years in Canada I had believed that perhaps I might think about doing another kind of work, my theater experience had tempted me to do something outside of government. I'd written a few plays and I'd made some overtures and I went to New York and did the rounds and then came back and decided no, I was better off staying within my chosen career. The question is, what to do next.

Evaluation of Efforts in Canadian Tour

Q: Before you—I presume you're about to leave the discussion of Canada. Do you have any evaluation as to how effective your work was with the leading journalists and media people? Do you think that you were able to explain the U.S. position and perhaps assist somewhat in the relationship between the two countries over these things, trade and acid rain were particularly difficult areas of contention at that time, still are to a considerable extent.

SHELLENBERGER: I think everybody contributed to amelioration of attitudes. We certainly had access to the public pulpits in making our views known on any of these issues and I think we were not dismissed but were fairly treated in the media. The contacts we had in Montreal and Toronto and Vancouver with the media were extraordinarily close and constructive. I think we were able to make a difference in terms of attitudes by means of the International Visitor Program, which one might argue, well, Canada, it's just across the border. The fact is the Canadian movers and shakers see very little of the United

States in their visits. They go either to the sun region for the winter, as the Canadian snow goose contingent, or they go to New York or Washington. And what we did was give them an opportunity to see parts of the United States far removed from these more familiar places.

1983: Shellenberger Withdraws Request for ParisAssignment — Bids for and Gets Japan

I had bid on PAO Paris but I withdrew it after coming back from the Versailles summit. It struck me that the job in Paris seemed largely a case of wining and dining and being an escort for VIPs, at least that's the way Jack Hedges characterized the job. And suddenly Tokyo came up, which was not expected at that particular time, and I did bid on the Tokyo job, with the proviso that I get a year of full-time language training. So that was agreed to and in 1983 I went to Yokohama, found a dark but comfortable apartment about a 25-minute walk from the Yokohama language school on the bluff overlooking Yokohama Harbor.

The Grind of Studying the Japanese Language

My memories of Yokohama are mostly the unrelenting grind of study, a very, very simple regime of study, munching a sandwich during the noon break, preparing a very simple meal at my apartment, and studying some more. I enjoyed the companionship and friendship of my sensei, the teachers, they were more or less my contemporaries rather than my seniors in age. And they opened many doors culturally to me so that I was able to get a sense of the Japanese culture of the '80s which was then, as they often asked me, contrasted with the Japanese culture of the '50s. I think what I found most different in the '80s was the Japanese ability to speak out and laugh heartily during the day. In the '50s it would happen only at night and when people had been drinking. But now it was much more up-front and much more natural, reflecting a kind of self-confidence that was not as apparent in the late 1950s.

1984: Assumption of Public Affairs Officer Position in Tokyo

At the end of the year I moved to the PAO residence in Tokyo, which was a far cry from the rather, wouldn't say mean, but ordinary, establishment I had in Yokohama. Here was a two-story penthouse apartment with two balconies overlooking Akasaka and Roppongi, Azabu, a car and driver at my disposal, a housekeeper, cook, so it was a different lifestyle entirely. My new wife and daughter joined me a month after I got to Tokyo. So again it was not only a new physical environment but a very different living regime.

The Tokyo years were, as they have always been, eventful. Having an ambassador of the quality of Mike Mansfield as your mentor was a privilege. His standing within the Japanese official community, and unofficial community, was so high as to permit the resolution of many of our nitty-gritty problems. Ambassador Mansfield always said, we spend too much time in the minutiae of the Japan-U.S. relationship and we should be crafting the framework for a U.S.-Japan free trade area. Some economists feel that that would not be to our benefit. It would lead possibly to a diminution of our technological edge. But of course it would also give our traders greater access to the Japanese market.

Q: Of course our superiority in technology has diminished pretty substantially without the aid of an open-end trade agreement, and I don't think we've done nearly as much as we should to remedy that fact.

SHELLENBERGER: The '80s—this is before '88—was also a time of continuing competition and rivalry with the Soviet Union in security matters, and Japan's steadfast performance on the security front and its readiness to share more and more of the burden, the cost of maintaining our forces there I think muted some of the more eager members of the Administration who would mix the political security relationship with that of the trade relationship. Since '88 that's changed and I think under the Bush Administration there is disposition to take aim at trading practices that might have not been aimed at with the same force as during the last part of the Reagan Administration.

Among the events of the late '80s in Japan was the Tsukuba Expo which was, for the U.S. Pavilion explaining artificial intelligence. Complex subject, to say the least. But our involvement was marginal, it was actually managed by an exhibits team of professionals.

Q: Was that the one that Hank Gosho was masterminding?

SHELLENBERGER: Hank Gosho was the man in the trenches, handling the public relations part of it, but being a very constructive presence.

During our Tokyo years, we had the opportunity to see in action most of the major personalities in the United States lexicon: actors, poets, politicians, groups, orchestras, operas, ballet. It was simply a torrent of personalities coming to a country which was, as ever, fascinated by what was going on in the American scene, whether it be the arts or the politics, the technological. And the great difference between this time and 1955-59 was that most of these people were coming on the Japanese ticket. And that ticket could be very pricey, as we know when Reagan came out after his presidency as the guest of Fuji Sankei Communications for a fee of $2 million.

In my role as the Counselor of Public Affairs, I saw more of these events and personalities than would normally be the case. One is that I had very solid contacts with many of the media leaders and the media often were the funders for these events.

Q: Was Yomiuri [newspaper] still riding high in that regard?

SHELLENBERGER: Yomiuri was—they all were riding high and they tried to outdo each other as to who could bring in the biggest, classiest, most prestigious act or event.

Q: At this time had Japan progressed far enough so that they had cultural events, particularly in the musical field, which were favorably comparable with those coming out from the United States, or did you feel there was still a considerable difference between them?

SHELLENBERGER: Well, the market for things Japanese in the United States, while growing, and certainly sushi was one of the new fads, appreciation for Japanese cultural aggregations would be limited pretty much to your afficionado, whereas in Japan there was no limit to the people who wanted to see Michael Jackson or the Metropolitan Opera. No, there was a difference of considerable degree.

The other thing that gave us access was the fact that the Mansfields were very selective about what they did after hours. And the fewer events the better as far as they were concerned. So we would very often represent them, which offered a great opportunity to meet on repeated occasions members of the Imperial Family and leading people, personalities in the government and arts worlds.

I took up golf for the first time since playing in Moulmein, Burma, as a way of getting some exercise, but also as a way to, oh, have a point of reference with certain of these Japanese contacts for whom golf was a very important activity. And again, Fuji Sankei asked whether I would play in a celebrity tournament which would precede a major professional tournament involving a lot of Americans, among others. So like a fool, I did agree. The only thing I can be grateful for is that I didn't knock somebody in the head with one of my missed shots. Isao Aoki was in our group and he would have been considered in those days one of the top golfers in the world. He was—what's the word?—tolerant of my poor play.

Q: You ought to have been able to get a designated hitter.

SHELLENBERGER: Well, I was being watched by innumerable cameras and that also inhibited me from getting a designated hitter.

When I compare Japan in my latter time there with the earlier time, and also with time in other parts of the world, I think what struck me most about my situation professionally was the fact that my title meant more than my name, as compared with the '50s when my name

meant more than my title. And truly, it was clear that in Canada my name was more than the title. But in Tokyo, Japan, as the Counselor of Embassy for Public Affairs, that was the addressee and Shellenberger had very little meaning. I remember in Yokohama I had no meishi or name card. And it was always a matter of being somewhat nude and putting off some Japanese who didn't know where you were coming from, making them a little uncomfortable because they didn't readily identify your status and so forth. Once I had the meishi with that title, I was, you know, given deference and being added to invitation lists to the extent that I was doing four or five or six evening events a week. Fortunately, weekend entertainment was purely social.

During my Yokohama days I was able to meet what they call volunteer Japanese conversationalists. These were ladies who would come over once a week and just talk with a student about anything. And the one who was assigned to me had a brother in Tokyo that she wanted me to meet, said I would find him interesting. And indeed when I got to Tokyo, we invited him and his wife over and subsequently learned that he was a minor powerhouse, plutocrat, not in the establishment sense but in having made it on his own. He was not an educated man but he had gotten into the printing business at about the same time as the Occupation and was awarded a contract. And he turned all of his profits into property acquisition.

Q: When it was dirt cheap.

SHELLENBERGER: When it was very inexpensive, and now here he was a 55-year-old man who was semi-retired who had, among other things, an airplane with pilots and attendants; he had a yacht and hotels and restaurants. He didn't know me on the basis of my name card, I don't think he cared about that. And we established a relationship that was without reference to my day-to-day agenda. But it was again very rewarding. He didn't have English and so it was an opportunity for me to use Japanese much more than would be the case with many of our more cosmopolitan contacts. But to be in his, what's the word,

Q: Financial league?

SHELLENBERGER: In his company and seeing how he moves and what he makes of political issues was quite at odds with a lot that I might be reading in the newspapers, because he was a man of the streets and he knew everybody's number. I don't believe he was a particular partisan of any cause, but I do know that his support, as it were, was sought after by all political figures.

Anyway, that was an interesting relationship that developed right from the beginning of my Tokyo days and continued, in fact my last weekend in Japan four years later was spent at his bungalow (really a misnomer), but his place in Hayama overlooking a lovely harbor. So he is a memory.

Another memory is the chance to reunite with two old friends from the 50s, a professor of American Literature at Chiba University, and a documentary film producer. We had been very close in the late '50s and now we resumed our relationship which again didn't have much to do with my work at the Embassy, but which I think gave me other eyes, other spectacles, with which to see what was happening in our relationship.

I know you wrote a very memorable letter, end of the year kind of letter, about your impressions of Japan that was emerging in the late '80s as being resentful or—not resentful but being—

Q: Somewhat arrogant.

SHELLENBERGER: Arrogant, condescending toward the American and the American presence and certainly there's been literature on this.

Some have opined that the Japanese could turn into a very (vis-a-vis the U.S.) alienated power that would strike whatever deal it needed to for expediency. After all, in the world of economics it is a mercantilist power, and ideologically it could develop the

same way. What will deter this, in my view, and I see a lot of it happening and I think a lot of it was strengthened, or at least emphasized during my tenure, was the growth of private relationships between Japanese and Americans, exchanges, just a whole panoply of interrelationships whether it be through alumni organizations, through Fulbright scholarships, International Visitors Program, Youth for Understanding. These I think are nurturing among the Japanese who take part a sense that we and the Americans need each other, not simply as markets but as forces for societal and global change.

The Growing Bitterness Between the U.S. and Japan

Q: The thing that disturbed me particularly in the middle of last year, which was the time that I was getting all this feedback out there was not only Ishihara's book but there were two or three other books written. One of them was written by a reporter who had interviewed not very many Americans, but he had interviewed a number of the Japanese who had participated in the first three or four Japan-America student conferences back in the pre-war days and who had been very pro-U.S. as a result of that participation and even during World War II had kept their distance to the extent they could from the Japanese government. They were almost as bitter about the U.S. in their conversation, as were others, less informed, even having had that pre-War relationship, which was very unusual in Japan in those days. They had come around to a rather hardened viewpoint on the American attitude toward Japan. They considered the Americans arrogant, non-comprehending, blustering and overbearing in their demands on the Japanese, and unfortunately were not ready to look sufficiently I think at their own failures in opening up their economy. But nevertheless, it isn't what the facts are, it's what they believe. The fact was that these were the kind of people who were expressing this sort of antipathy toward the United States, and there was an awful lot of it in the Japanese press. The press was quite bitter about it. And of course that coincided with the time that the U.S. had just declared Japan a potential point of attack for Law 301, threatening to put them on the more or less embargoed list as being an unfair trader. I think it eased up a little this year,

but I just wondered how much of that you encountered during the latter part of your term over there.

SHELLENBERGER: No, I felt that we were politically, economically, our relationship was as Mansfield said, the best he'd known it in ten years when I left in '88. And he said as much. So the cracking and the seepage of this attitude that you speak of began after—not that I had anything to do with it, but it began to leak out after the Mansfield years, not, again, because he departed, but events conspired to make '89 a year of rethinking on the part of very serious Japanese.

I have heard about a book that's just out by Tadashi Yamamoto and, I've forgotten the other, on U.S.-Japan societal perceptions of each other that I'm looking forward to reading. It's a brand new book. They examine it, using as I understand, the Japan-America Societies themselves and their memberships in both the United States and Japan. Interesting, in my time in '88 I believe it was that Kyoto established its first Japan-America Society ever. And the ones that, the sister city, the sister state activities were increasing; university affiliations were on the rise and are still on the rise. These are the things that I like to think count in bilateral relations. More and more Americans studying Japanese and more and more universities having Japanese connections, and vice versa, will I think engender attitudes among the younger generation that will not lead to the formulation that what we face is a great beast.

Q: About a month ago I read an article, I can't remember where, whether it was in—it had to be in some paper other than a Washington paper because I read it while I was still abroad, whether it was a New York Times or the Herald Tribune or an English language Japanese paper, but there apparently is a group of about half a dozen books coming out starting in August and September on the American side that are all very serious Japan-bashers. It's apparently the answer on the American side to the Ishihara book of last year, which by the way is going to be published in English shortly I'm told, in the U.S.

SHELLENBERGER: It's not much of a book. Have you read it?

Q: I haven't had a chance to read it yet.

SHELLENBERGER: The version that was making the rounds in Washington was a pirated thing and it is relatively incoherent, it needs a lot of work.

Q: Of course part of the incoherence may be due to the fact they didn't have a good translator, but I'd be interested when the book comes out, I'd like to read it then. I hope that these books that are coming out aren't as seriously taken in Japan as I'm afraid they may be. It would just add more fuel to the fire of bitterness.

Japanese Student Attitudes

Q: The next question I want to ask, and this has to do with something we were discussing before on the growing toughness of Japanese attitude — of the antipathy, did you have any occasion to be in close relationship with any of the student populations whom I gather are now, as they were in earlier years, attempting to be more radical? Students often seem to be among the first to develop anti-American attitudes, or anti-foreign attitudes.

SHELLENBERGER: In contrast to the '50s, it was a totally changed picture. Whereas in the '50s we could rarely get on a campus, much less do any program work, now campuses were readily accessible. The thing about the student population in most, in all of the universities that I went to, and I went to all of them that I could as I went around Japan, I encountered not the slightest hostility that was ideologically based. There might be some resentment, especially in the Ryukyus about our military presence occupying so much of the real estate of Naha and it's environs, but it was never what I would call radicalized. In fact what struck me most about the '80s is the relative apathy of the students, that the students were as they are here more engaged in preparing for a career or some kind of slot with an organization that would give them economic security. That was the number one goal of students. There obviously would be splinter groups that would come into the

fore on issues such as the banning on whale hunting and environmental disputes, but it never approached the numbers that could be turned out for a political cause as was the case in the late '50s. The demonstration against the battleship “New Jersey” visit in '85 was a great hype but a conspicuous failure in terms of numbers.

Q: Quite a contrast to Korea today where the students are in the forefront in every anti-American activity that goes on and very bitterly so.

SHELLENBERGER: Couldn't be a greater contrast.

Q: I want to go back briefly to your comment about your title meaning what it did. I think there's another difference between now and then. In the '50s the old line ambassadorial group and the old line Foreign Service had not yet been willing to give USIA officers the kind of titles that would grant prestige among the people with whom we have to be in contact. The whole attitude towards the USIA program is today vastly different than it was in those days, which of course makes it in one respect much easier.

On another subject, how did you read the Japanese media on American-Japanese relations, particularly in the trade difficulties which was of course one of the major, if not the major, source of friction?

SHELLENBERGER: Well, nowadays the Japanese media representation in Washington, D.C. is variegated and huge. And they cover microscopically every Congressional hearing, every Congressional statement and feed it back to the homeland. And what would be considered an obscure reference to the U.S.-Japan trade picture suddenly becomes a headline on the front page. And of course it made our jobs very interesting. We would have to explain to the editor that, yes, this was said, but this individual's role in the Congress is of small moment. If you remember the time some Congressional people took hammers and beat a Toshiba radio, audio cassette to pieces and the spectacle was repeated and repeated and repeated on Japanese TV. It became part of not only that days news show but of subsequent news shows. In fact, a year later, to open a discussion of

U.S.-Japan trade relations, they would rerun this shot of the Congressional people banging on the Toshiba set. So there was a proclivity to sensationalize what was said and done by Americans, especially in the Congress, on trade issues.

But then at the same time coverage accorded governors who were coming to Japan seeking investment was full and fair, and the negotiations that took place constantly by ourselves and the Japanese were covered to a fault, to a fault, I mean, because the Japanese media is used to being briefed about everything. And there's no such thing as a privileged negotiation from their point of view. So it would make our negotiating side angry. As Clyde Prestowitz would recount it, before a negotiation was even into its early innings there would already be outcomes as projected by Japanese spokespersons to the media.

I think in the last year a lot of this has been overcome. It's been partly the degree of discipline, maybe, that's been imposed by the Kaifu Administration in its attempt to not let the cat out of the bag. One particularly insidious example of media treatment was contained in a pseudo-documentary produced by Nogyou, an agricultural cooperative with immense resources, which suggested to the viewer that eating American agricultural products, or imported, I should say, agricultural products could lead to deformities, could lead to monstrous genetic effects, all done as if this was scientifically based. I learned about it through a friend who was in the film industry and we obtained a copy. It was for sale in any video store. We fanned out as a country team. The Agricultural Counselor went to the Ministry of Agriculture; I went to the public affairs person for the Foreign Ministry and told him about it. They got hold of the product and—oh, the Labor Counselor went to the Labor Ministry—and Japanese officialdom saw immediately that this was a gross insult. And it was withdrawn, the video.

Now a year, two years later I saw another prime time TV program which is a cartoon something like the Simpsons, a family, not flagrant at all but very subtly suggesting that Japanese rice in no way should be augmented by imported rice because it had very special health giving, safe tastes and all the things. But it—

Q: Even medicinal qualities, no doubt.

SHELLENBERGER: Exactly. And very cleverly done. It's not something you could say, wait a minute, this is an attempt to define other people's products as unsafe or unsanitary. No, it was—but it was very subtle, with the message being Japan must not open its rice market. But done in a cartoon.

Q: With regard to the press play on things American, Bob Garrity, the gentleman who just before he retired was head of the Foreign Press Center here for USIA, said that the Japanese correspondents were having a very difficult time with their home newspapers because they were being leaned upon to find examples of American decadence and loss of skills, decline in their scientific and other similar activities, and also the decline in their finances and their will to operate, to compete in the world. The Japanese editors wouldn't take stories which these correspondents were sending back to their home papers that contradicted this viewpoint on the part of their editors. I don't know really how that's played out in the Japanese press, but according to this gentleman there were a lot of disappointed and really frustrated Japanese correspondents here from the major papers in Tokyo who were getting these kind of requests and finding that stories to the contrary were not acceptable back home. Were you able to detect any of that?

SHELLENBERGER: No, I would argue that that would be maybe on the basis of a personality who's feeling the threat of competition thinking that we can maybe get an edge over our competition by running the more bizarre, the more sensational items about the U.S. demise. But I think that would be the exception rather than any kind of rule. I was struck by the number of major media who gave their reporters free rein to do Americana pieces, what's going on in the small towns and the rural sections, not keyed to drugs or keyed to racial problems but keyed to Americana and its overview. Again, I was struck by the variety of this sort of reportage that was available. Sure, you could turn on the TV and get mayhem at night in Detroit almost as a regular thing, but balancing that would be something quite thoughtful and expressive. So, again, I don't see it as a tide, I see it as

rivulets that go into the media of any free country that doesn't have, you know, that isn't setting the media's agenda. And I don't think anybody is.

Brief Return to Questions on Canada

Q: I want to go back to a couple of very quick questions on Canada. I was interested that we had no post in Quebec and that—

SHELLENBERGER: Montreal.

Q: I thought we didn't have one, but you had one in Montreal, I forgot, that's right. Particularly in view of what's happening in Canada now. [The possible break up of Canada.] How much of that disagreement and difficulty did you experience while you were there? Of course that has nothing directly to do with America, the U.S., but—.

SHELLENBERGER: Again, it was a quiet time for the Quebec independence movement. Leveque had been defeated and his movement as such was in low repute. Pierre Trudeau was Canadian Prime Minister and he had given sufficient assurances to the Quebecer that their society and social priorities would not be ignored or subsumed in English speaking Canada. It was before the Meech Lake Accord, which I think was an attempt to meet Quebec needs but perhaps it went too far, it certainly did go too far as far as a couple of the provinces were concerned.

Q: As I think on it, I thought it went too far in giving Quebec a special role.

SHELLENBERGER: So in my time the Quebec issue was quiet.

Q: One final question in regard to Canada. Acid rain you said was one of the principal problems that you had confronted. Did the fact that obviously the Reagan Administration gave lip service, but not much importance to it, provoke any great resentment among the Canadians in that regard?

SHELLENBERGER: There was resentment, along with a grudging admittance that 50 percent of the problem is coming from Canada. So clean up of their own act was underway . . . Canadians started reinforcing their standards in terms of scrubbing, putting in scrubbers in their power stations. And I think they were able to convince the environmental community that we were lagging, finally, but that was, again, after my time. In my time it was considered to be a problem that needed a lot of study, studies were going on throughout my time there. The rhetoric was don't, let's not spend this thing to death till we know what we're doing. The picture was not scientifically all that concrete. I think certainly pollutants going into the air do have an effect on lake and nature generally, so it's a problem that's shared and requires attention from all sides.

Final Comments

Q: Finally, in closing this interview, do you have any comments you'd like to make as your sort of swan song on your career thus far? I guess you may have one more assignment after your current one before you retire, but how do you see your career in the Agency over the years?

SHELLENBERGER: Well, I think what I'm doing now as the Dean of the School of Area Studies, which involves me in all parts of the world, including all the places I used to serve in, culminates really a very satisfying professional experience. I'm in a position to reflect on what it is that people need to know about an area and a culture and a country to better perform their jobs, and I think that's my role here. The fact that I've been on five or six continents, and for substantive work experiences, gives me a license to appraise, assess, and redirect programs. I think particularly of my West Europe experience, in the late '60s and now, in another couple of years, Europe will emerge as one of the three or four major centers of power, influence. I think my years with the Common Market have given me a better appreciation of what that may mean, in defining our relationships—somebody wrote the other day, there's no more Third World. And I tend to agree that there are many worlds and the vast differences between countries and their ability to manage their economies is

striking. What we used to see when we came to USIA at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue was a plaque on the corner of the building that said, “Winning the hearts and minds of peoples around the world.” Well, that was our mission. Whether we've done it or not, I think there is a much greater respect for the ideas of democracy and pluralism in societies than was the case when we were pretty much divided into two halves. And insofar as I have had anything to do about that, well, my father said to me as I entered junior officer training, “What is your ultimate career goal?” And I said, “I'd like to work myself out of a job so that we wouldn't need it.” And if communications revolution continues, a good deal of what Americana is all about will be available to people without filters or—official interpreters—

Q: Yes, certainly a far different world now than it was 30 or 40 years ago.

SHELLENBERGER: Those are my thoughts.

Q: Okay, Jack, thank you very much. That will complete the interview.

End of interview